

The Best  
of  
GRACE KARR'S

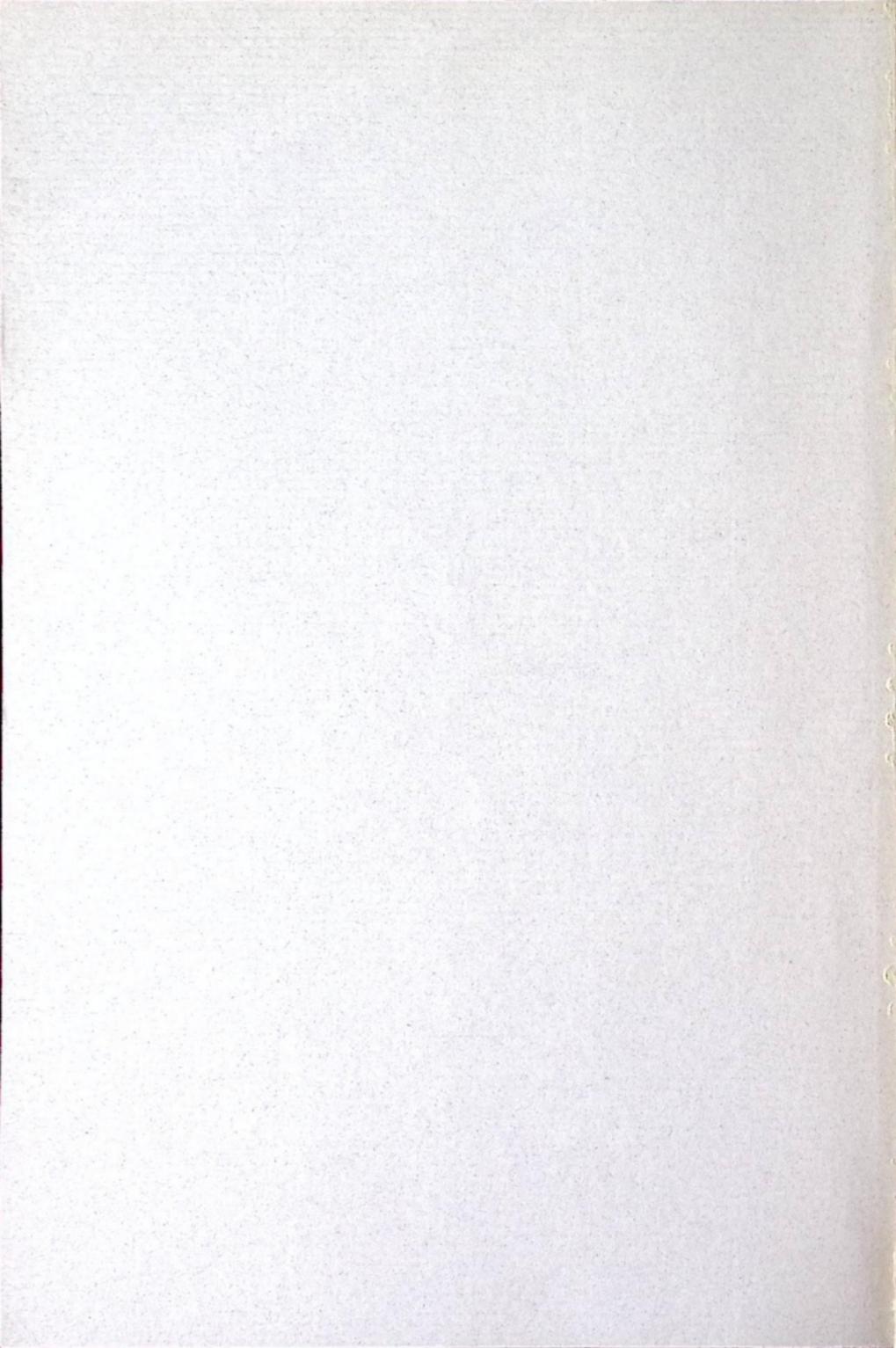
CORDOVA NEWS

by  
Harriet Heusinkveld



(Ruth Perkey)

CORDOVA (1887-1962) WAS A CREATION OF THE WABASH RAILROAD.



Janet Kooi

775

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**The Best  
of  
GRACE KARR'S  
CORDOVA NEWS**

collected and  
edited by

**Harriet Heusinkveld**



(Bill Karr)

Grace Cronkhite Karr, 1950s

"When your friends and neighbors share  
sweet corn and other garden products  
with you and armloads of flowers  
with each other, the world is a more  
happy place."      Mrs. Grace Karr, 8/3/50

\* \* \* \* \*

"Remember your cards to sick folks. It may be more important  
than polishing your stove."      Mrs. Grace Karr, 6/17/48

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## FOREWORD

This book is for those who enjoy looking back and discovering another way of life than ours today, to a time when life was simpler but rich in enjoyment, to a time when family and community relations were strong and cherished, to a time when life on the farm, though hard, was enviable and ennobling, to a time when people made their own good times. Readers are reminded of customs all but forgotten from their own past.

This book is for those who once faithfully read Mrs. Grace Karr's *Cordova News* in the Pella Chronicle (Pella, Iowa) with many a chuckle as well as with musings over her words of wisdom. It is especially for those who once lived in Cordova and knew the people involved. For them, it is a nostalgic trip back to the "good old days."

This book is written to preserve an historic treasure—not only a way of life that is no more, but a style of newspaper writing that is intimate and genuine though a bit unconventional. It is history with a day-to-day touch.

I am among those who faithfully read and enjoyed *Cordova News*, and for years have wanted to bring it back to life, if possible. During the past two years, I have browsed through hundreds of old Pella Chronicles for *Cordova News* columns and copied those items which I thought were of lasting value. The items I have included in this book are but a small fraction of those I had originally chosen.

I have organized these items in chronological order so that a miscellany of topics is continually being covered, and the reader feels that he/she is participating in the various ongoing affairs of the community. Interspersed among the news items are philosophical musings, timely bits of advice, and Mrs. Karr's reverent, poetic observations of Nature.

I am grateful to many people who gave me information and anecdotes and photos and helped me understand what Cordova had been. Instead of being one of the most insignificant places on earth, the community became for me one of unusual human interest and value. I wish to express my thanks for help given me by Darlene and Bill Karr, Ruth Hart Perkey, Dorothy Templeton, Jean Visser McKay, Betty Zimmerman, Donald Butler, Will and Susan Prather, Jennie Breen, Jennie Vroom, Reda Van Zante, Johanna Vos, Margaret Vanden Berg, Lois Van Zante, Marjorie and Paul Vos, Blanche Templeton, Loren and Logan Vander Zyl, Edgar Van Arkel, Alice Lammers, Bernice Bosch, Elaine Jaarsma, the personnel of the Central College Library, the Pella Carnegie-Vierson Library, the Knoxville Public Library, and the State Historical Library at Des Moines.

# I

## INTRODUCTION

Unearthing *Cordova News*, a weekly column written by Grace Cronkhite Karr for the Pella Chronicle from 1927 to 1967, was like finding an unexpected treasure and then like working a jigsaw puzzle, trying to put the pieces together. Three aspects of my findings are highlighted in this book:

1. the *Cordova News* column itself, a column which was amazingly popular with readers here and there across the country and even abroad. It was read by journalism students and faculty at Michigan State University and the University of Iowa and enjoyed by Pella's Central College students and townspeople. In large part, it was Grace Karr's uniquely unconventional homespun style which so charmed her readers.
2. the world of Cordova, people and places, as unfolded in *Cordova News*. Grace Karr presented a sympathetic sketch of the people of a small closely-knit Des Moines River neighborhood in Iowa through the middle decades of the 20th century, a period somewhat neglected in the annals of Iowa. Sadly, the story ended in the 1960s when Cordova became a victim of the U. S. Government plan to dam the Des Moines River. Cordova was drowned under the waters of the newly formed Lake Red Rock. A traumatic ending for a cherished community.
3. the woman, Grace Karr—her philosophy of life, her growth as a writer and her rise to becoming the best known person in her community.

### The Role and Style of *Cordova News*

"Do you remember *Cordova News*?" I asked many people of the Pella area before beginning my study. Without exception, a broad smile or a chuckle was the first response. "It was like the funnies". . ."Cordova News was the first thing I read, and later I read the rest of the Chronicle, if I had time." . ."When I came from New York to Central College, I was homesick, and reading *Cordova News* was a comfort, because it told about the little everyday things so similar to what we did at home. When the Chronicle came, many of the girls congre-

gated in the dormitory lounge, and someone read *Cordova News*, and we'd all laugh." In fact, a sort of *Cordova News* cult existed on campus, and at one time two Central faculty members composed and sang *Cordova News Blues* for an all-college skit night (see p. 10). A Central College student, who later transferred to Hope College in Holland, Michigan, presented a program of readings from *Cordova News* to regale the students there.

Amazingly, Mrs. Karr's column was read by various people throughout the country, who subscribed to the Chronicle just so they could read *Cordova News*. Two newspapers, one in Corona, California, and one in Indiana, ran bits of her column now and then. Mrs. Karr had several readers from India and at least one from Japan. For some years, a Cordova woman translated the column into Dutch for the Pella Weekblad.

Naturally, Grace Karr wrote her column for her own Cordova people, and they were staunch supporters, and when on several occasions, she thought she'd give up writing the column, they insisted that she continue — or when the Chronicle editor suggested she cut her column in half, they protested so loudly that he quickly withdrew the suggestion. That other people, outsiders, enjoyed reading it was an unexpected bonus for Mrs. Karr.

*The Writer Knows Nature* appeared in the University of Iowa's journalism publication Iowa Publishers Trade Magazine, February, 1949. It said in part:

"Folks are interested in what a country correspondent of a weekly newspaper sees about her, through the window of her kitchen out in the farm yard, in the field, along the river, etc. The Pella Chronicle has such a correspondent. She is Mrs. Grace Karr of Cordova, Iowa, an inland town near the Des Moines River in Marion County, a farm housewife. Through the year, she tells her readers how the quail nests, about a bull snake that comes into the dooryard at her home, about the chickadees and nuthatches, and the robins and wrens, and their nesting habits—sweetening up her little observations with timely information gathered from a good bird book."

"And in the spring she tells about the long lines of ducks and geese as they migrate, about the flood waters of the Des Moines River, and of the trials of some of her neighbors who live in the river bottom."

"She has an easily read conversational style of writing in which some colloquialisms creep, making her weekly column a bit different. Sometimes her column is read by the ultra-sophisticated who may poke fun at it. Surprisingly, some of the people who read the column with pleasure are city dwellers living at a distance who have never seen Cordova nor known Mrs. Karr—they find something earthy in it that strikes a universal chord. They find it refreshing to read about the country folks who love and till the good earth."

Mrs. Karr was genuinely interested in the people she wrote about—some were her relatives; many were neighbors who had never lived in any other place

than Cordova. She had known them from childhood on. She pointed up the dignity of ordinary people in Cordova. Every man, woman, and child was important. She helped make Cordova a place where one was needed, felt secure, and was the equal of all others.

After reading the column for a time, outside readers felt they knew the Cordova people, too, and when one of them was suffering, empathized with them and waited for the next edition of the paper for the latest report. Most of all, they chortled about Mrs. Karr's choice of topics and her exuberant, informal, sometimes a bit disjointed, style. They read it because it was amusing, yet comforting, too.

### The Little World of Cordova

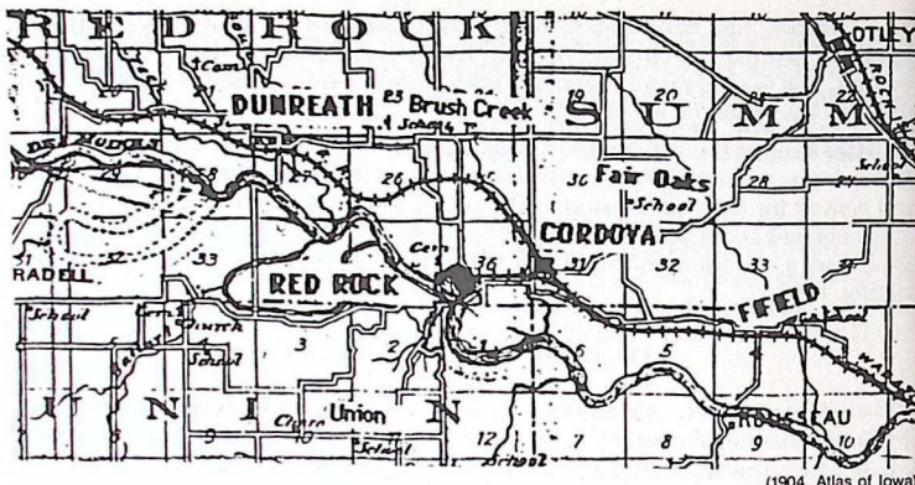
Cordova was located a little more than a mile north of the Des Moines River about 30 miles downstream from the City of Des Moines. It was one of the tiny towns which the Wabash Railroad had platted in 1887 at three- or four-mile intervals as it charted its course from St. Louis to Des Moines. The little freight and passenger depot the Wabash built was Cordova's main reason for being.

Cordova was always an unincorporated village, which means that it did not have a mayor or a town council but was administered by the county, principally by the sheriff. In its heydey it had perhaps 25 people. They lived along the railroad track or a block or so back from it. Before Cordova was founded, the principal houses were already there, farmhouses whose lands extended north or south of the tracks which were later to be built. They continued to be farmhouses though their inhabitants now lived in the town (as well as on the farm). The Roy Karrs, for example, were farmers, who lived across the road from the depot.

Later (March 10, 1960) Mrs. Karr was to write, "Roy and I have lived in this neighborhood for 35 years. I knew Cordova when it had an elevator, stock yards, grain office, garage and machine warehouse, a bank, two stores, a big depot, post office, and six homes. Yes, there was also a coal loading ramp and crusher in that time, too, plus whatever I've forgotten. And at one time there was a Wabash spur to the sandstone quarry at Red Rock."

One might wonder how anyone could write a long column of news each week about such an exceedingly small population. The fact was that Mrs. Karr tapped the agricultural area extending out several miles in each direction from Cordova, its center. Furthermore, the Cordova community included Red Rock, a sister village, a mile away. It was older and larger (26 families in 1944), and had aspired to having the railroad, but because it was on lower ground and more subject to flooding, the Wabash had by-passed it.

Red Rock farmers and merchants thus had to depend on Cordova for railroad facilities, and in turn, Cordova depended on the Red Rock Methodist Church for worship services, and on the one-room Red Rock rural school for the education of their children. The schoolhouse was the social center for the people of the two villages and its surrounding farm area. The Red Rock Cemetery up



(Today, the Cordova Trail, marked and maintained by the Iowa Department of Natural Resources, has been laid out through North Elk Rock State Park, across these acres of timber on the bluffs above Lake Red Rock. The elm tree, which is described by the DNR as being the oldest and the tallest elm in Iowa, was a part of the timber land of the Roy and Grace Karr farm. The lower part of the farm is all under the lake).

The people who walked through the columns of Mrs. Karr's *Cordova News* were neighbors, school teachers, the young men who served in World War II and later the Korean War, Raleigh salesmen, tramps, children in school and at play, and most notably farmers and their wives. Prominently mentioned were "Grandma" Hart, pioneer settler and Cordova's first storekeeper and postmistress; her son R. M. "Dutch" Hart, later the storekeeper and postmaster, and his wife Ethel Hart; Grace Karr herself, farmwife and chronicler of Cordova happenings; her husband Roy Karr; and their son **Billy Gene Karr** (later called Bill); and his wife Darlene **Ballard Karr** and their daughters **Sharon, Susan, and Jennie**; **Mrs. May Van Hemert**, widowed farmer; and her son-in-law **George Dailey**, the mail carrier. The Harts, the Karrs, and Mrs. Van Hemert lived in Cordova through the generations and were basically the population of the town.

Then there were the Red Rock farm area people, the Templetons, for example: **Joe and Mary Templeton**, close friends of the Karrs from way back, their son **Hugh Templeton** and wife **Dorothy Core Templeton**; and Joe's daughter **Sarah Templeton Harvey** and husband **Dwight Harvey**. The Harveys and the Hugh Templetons farmed in partnership on a large farm halfway between Cordova and Red Rock. They were progressive farmers and community leaders. **James**, another son of Joe's, and wife **Blanche Karr Templeton** farmed some distance from the others.

A mile north of Red Rock lived Joe's sister, **Alice Templeton Visser**, farm widow, and her son **John Martin Visser**, bombardier in World War II and brilliant inventor, and his British war bride **Harriet Hayton Visser**.

Not primarily farmers were **Merl Price**, gravel and construction worker and his wife **Cecil Karr Price**, piano teacher; **Arthur Nichols**, storekeeper and elder-minister; and bachelor recluse **Bill Alley**, fisherman, all of whom lived in Red Rock; long-time Red Rock school teacher **Edgar Van Arkel** from Pella; and **Logan and Loren Vander Zyl** from Pella who operated a coal loading and propane gas plant in Cordova.

Among other neighbors were the **Murray Van Hemerts**, the **Otto Wynstekers**, the **Arthur and Arie Waardhuizens**, the **Joe and Delos Vanden Bergs**, the **Ted Buttrey**s, the **Bert, Clyde, and Lloyd Karrs**, the **Elmer Tukkers**, the **Griffith Mikesells**, the **Charles Fords**, the **Clarence and Calvin Brickers**, the **Tommy De Mosses**, the **Herman and Harry De Heers**, the **Donald Alleys**, the **Clyde Cores**, the **Herschel Wings**, the **Cecil and Henderson Reeses**, the **Bill Riherds**, the **Earl Rickabaughs**, the **Jess De Raads**, and the **Gerald Arments**.

**THE CORDOVA NEWS BLUES**

Words: Dr. Don Butler

Music: Dr. Jim Wilson

1962

The Army Engineers built Red Rock Dam

    Oh Yeah! Oh Yeah!

The water level's risin' o'er the land

    Oh Yeah! Oh Yeah!

And there's one major thing we'll miss from thar

    Oh Yeah! Oh Yeah!

It's *The Cordova News* by Mrs. Karr

    Oh Yeah! Oh Yeah!

I got the Cordova Noo-oo-oo-oo-oo-oos Blues

I got the Cordova Noo-oo-oo-oo-oo-oos Blues

Without it, The Chronicle has no use

    Oh Yeah! Oh Yeah!

I got the Cordova Noo-oo-oo-oo-oo-oos Blues.

The occasion for the singing of this ditty was a faculty skit to entertain students at Central College at Homecoming time. Both the faculty and the students were familiar with the *Cordova News* column, which in the 1950s and early 1960s had sort of a cult following.

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## II

**GRACE CRONKHITE KARR  
Her Ancestry and Early Years**

*Reminiscing became more and more a part of Grace Karr's writings as the years passed. Through her columns, one learns about her background and of her years before she became a Chronicle correspondent. Her ancestors were among the earliest pioneers in the Cordova area. (Editor's comments in italics).*

\*\*\*\*\*  
*Maternal grandparents.* 5/1/51. For a moment I pause in memory of my grandmother Houck who was born 114 years ago today. She was born Mary Jane Willemens of Delaware County, Ohio. There she married Lemul Houck on August 1, 1858. They traveled from Ohio to Iowa by covered wagon and were pioneers on the prairies near Grundy Center. They picked cow chips for fuel. Later they moved to Otley where my mother was born. I remember she lived where a cedar tree still stands. Grandma was the mother of 12 children. Her husband died May 1, 1885, when my mother Charity Houck was 9 years old. Grandma pieced many a quilt to help make a living. She acted as midwife for many babies in the neighborhood caring for every one of the George Carpenter babies.

When she grew old, Grandma Houck lived for periods of time in the homes of her children. She lived many years at our house. Each Sunday she would read a chapter from the Bible. Well do I remember her, her little odd habits and ways. She smoked a little clay pipe and was always embarrassed if anyone saw her, strangers that is. She busied herself in the last years of her life, piecing quilts for wages, or one for each grandchild, and there were many. She died March 28, 1918, at our house south of Cordova after having lived 81 years.

Our grandparents' stories sound pitiful, but they were happy. They were made of the "stuff" that made our country great and gave us the chance for advancement.

*Paternal grandmother.* 3/23/67. My grandmother Phoebe Walters Cronkhite was born on March 6. (I'd have to get out the records for the year). She raised red birds and blue jays. I can remember the bird cages in the attic when I was 12 years old. They probably burned with the house. She gave some of the birds

"the run of the house" part of the time. Once a neighbor came to visit and sat down in a rocker on a red bird and, of course, squashed him. My love for birds must have "stemmed" from and was handed down to me from Grandma Phoebe.

*Father.* 3/23/54 and 5/13/48. On February 26, 1866, my father A. E. Cronkhite, was born in a log cabin 2½ miles north of Knoxville just off of Hiway 14 to the east, down in the field near the creek. His father came here and bought the farm from the Government for \$1.25 an acre. My dad attended Crabapple school in a log cabin. He also attended a singing school there. When a young man, he went to work in northwest Iowa near Sioux City. Grandma Cronkhite wrote a long poem begging him to come home. I have the original copy she made on "foolscap."

*Marriage of Grace's parents.* 2/2/56. On February 17, 1897, my mother, Charity Houck, and my father, A. E. Cronkhite, were married at my grandmother's home near Fifield. My parents crossed the Des Moines River on the ice to their home. All of the years of their life after marriage were spent in a farm in Marion County except for one year they lived on a farm near Tracy, Minnesota.

*Grace Cronkhite's birth.* 4/13/61. I was born April 6, 1899, on a farm northwest of old Flagler at Shaft #3 about four miles south of Cordova. At that time it was a thriving coal mining town, and there were rows and rows of negro homes all alike across the road from our house. In 1918, Uncle Tom and Aunt Gustie Nace took me out there in an old Ford roadster so I could take a picture of the house. I still have it. The people living there almost refused me permission to take it, but it is an excellent picture.

*Memories of her childhood in the following items.* 3/5/59. I recall when my parents and I lived in Minnesota on the prairie 3 miles north of Tracy on a farm. My mother sent me to the mail box because there was a pattern to be there for a hood to be made of brown pleated velvet and light brown grosgrain ribbon (we were moving back to Iowa in a day or two). She stood in the window and watched me all the way to see that I didn't get blown off my course during the blizzard that was blowing. She couldn't go herself because she was expecting my brother Harry. Anyway, the pattern was there, and I got my new hood. I shall never forget it.

11/17/64. My dad built an ice house in Cordova and for three years it was stored full of ice buried in saw dust. Ice was harvested at the river. Saturday night, we saved our money to buy ice cream at the the "ice cream parlor." That was a rare treat. Another rare treat for kids of my time was oranges. If we had an orange at Christmas time, that was great! And our grocer would give us a bag of candy free on Saturday night. You could take it home, pour it out on the table and divide it evenly among us four, my sister and I, and two brothers.

2/23/56. Our parents never took us to school in cars. We walked or else stayed home. The years I walked to Fair Oaks school held my most happy memories. In cold and snow, you had old stockings pulled over overshoes and your mouth covered with a scarf and wore long underwear and home-made mittens. I learned to love the birds and flowers and keep away from the poison ivy.

*Grace went to Knoxville High School, about 7 miles from home, 1915-1919, a project which took some determination on the part of a young girl.* 4/23/59. I used to ride the train when I went to high school. I can remember when we had four passenger trains each day. I'd ride them every week-end when in high school. I would ride in the caboose on the Rock Island from Knoxville in the p.m. to Harvey and wait at the depot until some time near 8:00. It was terrible all alone there in the depot set away in the "wilds" by myself. The agent left work long before train time. Sometimes he came back to keep me company, and many times there were other passengers. Then on Monday morning, I'd board the early-morning train here and reverse the trip. Rock Island trains and Wabash used the same depot in Harvey. I always had school work to make up because I arrived late and missed classes.

*Graduation, 1919! (from later notes for a column not printed).* The river was out at graduation time. My folks drove a team and carriage with side curtains to Knoxville over the old Red Rock bridge to see me graduate, driving over the road and arriving home at midnight using a kerosene lantern for a light on the carriage. I know there wasn't anyone more proud than I, and my parents' joy was great, too. Seems you had put your whole heart into the work, and it was a hard earned diploma, which I always think my folks had earned, too, because they deprived themselves of things to put me through school. I was the first one in Grandma Houck's family to ever graduate.

*Grace as a young lady.* 4/25/55. Back in the 1920's, Leo Taylor took Nell, Delight, sister Gustia, and I up to Monroe in an automobile. We had a flat tire about half way there. We were all dressed in new organdy dresses and were "dumbies" about tires. But Leo took a lap robe and spread it on the ground, and we began. Some man came to our rescue. Wonder who he was.

*As a rural schoolteacher.* 1/12/56. Back in 1919, my dad took me in a buggy drawn by horses to the Joe Muilenburg home to apply for a teaching job at the Fair Oaks school. I used to walk to the Arie Waardhuizen home for my check.



(Bill Karr)

Grace Cronkhite, teacher, 1919.

5/3/57. I lived with Grandma Betty Jones one year. Ethel Jones and I used to sit at the kitchen table and correct our school papers at night. She taught Blair School, and I taught Union.

2/22/56. My brother Paul used to take me in a bobsled through deep snow the first year I taught at Fair Oaks. Oh, yes, then in 1925, "hubby" used to take me to Fair Oaks in a Ford, and snow drifts were so deep we'd get snow bound. He'd get out to push, and I'd try to drive, and I'd kill the motor. Then he'd crank the engine again, and "crank" in other ways, too, till we'd finally make it.

11/8/51. Thirty-two years ago, I gave my first school program at Halloween at Fair Oaks schoolhouse, and was I scared! We had a box supper and either George Dailey or Dutch Hart sold the boxes, and the house was packed. I had 18 pupils.

11/18/65. One time I rode the early morning Wabash to Fifield so that Mr. and Mrs. Pete Vanden Berg could take Gertrude Vos and I to Pella to teachers' meeting. It had rained. We rode in the "surrey with the fringe on top" with side curtains down. The hill at Verwers was so steep and slick, the little team of ponies would slip and slide and fall to their knees, and us women folks screamed.

10/27/65. Well do I remember my first state teachers' meeting in 1919. Ethel Jones took me "under her wing." We propped a chair against our locked hotel room door and checked locked windows. I learned more about getting around to different schools on streetcars for round table discussions than I know about the one-way streets in Des Moines today.

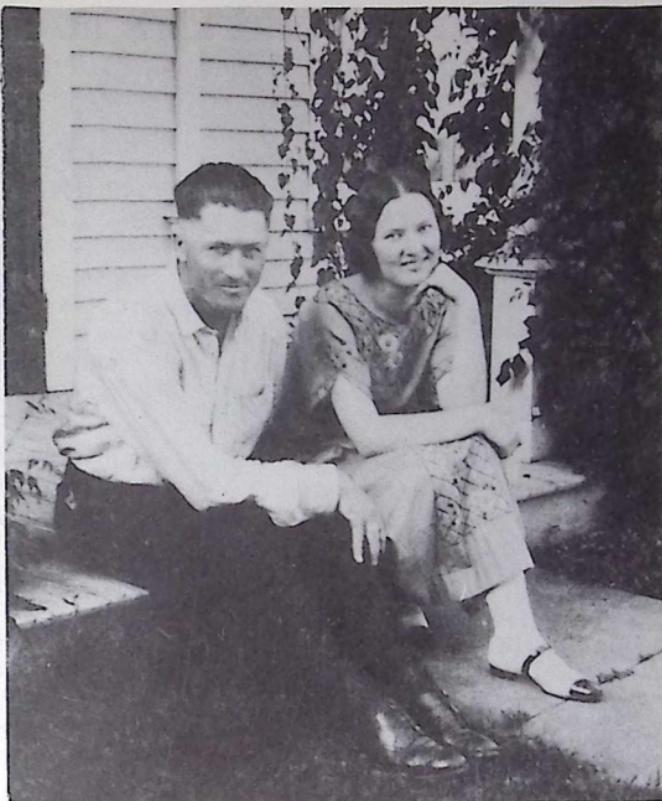
2/23/61. Little red school houses are my special love. I taught in them 5 years. You banked the pot bellied stove with big chunks of coal to keep the fire over night. One night a tramp slept at Fair Oaks all night. He left before I arrived the next morning. If I'd met him, I would have fainted in my shoes.

*Teacher in a town school.* 3/15/66. Fern Smith, my good teacher friend at Bussey in the 1922-25 era, and I practiced basketball with the high school girls, the uniform being middy blouses and big pleated bloomers that met in a band below the knees. Fern was the groom at a mock wedding for my shower before I was married, the bride's bouquet being onions, carrots, etc. and the wedding march, a school exercise march for physical training class.

*Grace married Roy Karr, a neighbor boy from "down the road" near Fifield.* 4/12/56 (and other dates). Thirty-one years ago today (April 5 1925), Roy and I were married in Pella in the home of the late Rev. Albert Vander Ploeg on a Sunday afternoon at 4:00 p.m. Nell Karr Bundy, Rev. Vander Ploeg's housekeeper, and her husband Henry Muilenberg acted as witnesses. First, Rev. Vander Ploeg took us upstairs to his study and filled out our marriage certificates and took us through a "practice ceremony" like they do today for big weddings, but ours was a very simple affair. Well do I remember the shelves after shelves of books in his study.

After the ceremony, we found out Henry was nervous. You would have thought he was the one being married. Roy couldn't get his tie tied that morn-

ing, and he didn't eat any dinner! I was very calm. My sister had made my wedding dress, blue satin trimmed in silver and gold metallic lace, and a gray satin hat to match my coat. I wore my old black shoes. Roy's suit was light gray. He has now outgrown it. I still have a cushion of my dress material, but the dress is worn out. The old saying goes, "You'll never get rich until you have worn out your wedding clothes." We came home to Roy's folks for supper, where his sister Rosa had prepared our supper. How time does fly and the years roll by!



(Bill Karr)

Newlyweds Roy and Grace Karr. Life's experiences are still ahead of them.

*For several years, Grace and Roy Karr lived in the upstairs rooms of her parents' home, using an oil heater both for cooking and heating. She continued to teach until 1927, when her son Billy Gene, was born. At the request of the editor of the Pella Chronicle, she started writing Cordova News in 1927.*

### III

## LIFE IN CORDOVA IN THE LATE 1920s

When in 1927, the editor of The Pella Chronicle asked Mrs. Karr to write a weekly column, she accepted with enthusiasm because she had enjoyed writing now and then for the Knoxville paper while in high school. It was something she could do at home and still care for her family. To get the news, she called neighbors frequently, or they dropped in to give her news items (she had an unbelievable number of visitors). She "rubbered" on the party line almost every time the telephone rang to learn what was going on in Cordova. Everyone knew that she did and accepted that fact—and joked a bit about it.

Little did she know that she would gain such popularity as a columnist. During the first years, her column was short, the items brief, and rather humdrum, very similar to most rural columns. She was afraid to "let herself go" as she did in later years.

The Cordova she depicted was 40 years old in 1927. People who lived at that time thought life was sophisticated. And it was—compared to life in pioneer days. They had the Wabash railroad and depot, so Cordova functioned as a railroad stop. Some of the people had automobiles—the automobile was the great advance of the '20s decade. However, Iowa roads were "dirt" roads, and often impassable. Communication with the outside world was through newspapers and other mail which came by train. The human mobility made possible by the railroad, however, made for a "heady" feeling concerning their time and place in history.

The horse had not disappeared from the scene. It was the main source of power on the farms, and would be for two more decades. A great deal of man-Household conveniences which later generations thought of as necessities—electricity, indoor toilets, running water, were yet to come.

\*\*\*\*\*

Items from Mrs. Karr's columns give an insight into the spirit of the times: (Editor's comments are in italic print).

**1927.** 11/10/27. There was a shooting match near Cordova Sunday. There was a good crowd, lots of good shooters from around different towns, and the boys all reported having a good time.

11/12/27. Cora Brandenhorst of Tracy came to Cordova Monday by train (*about 10 miles*) and waited here till folks from the United Store at Monroe came to get her (*6 miles*). She intends to work for them.

11/12/27. R. M. "Dutch" Hart took a load of chickens to Knoxville Tuesday, (*He accepted all kinds of produce in his store in exchange for groceries—eggs, cream, butter, and chickens.*)



(Ruth Hart Perkey)

"Dutch" Hart's store. Wife Ethel and daughters Ruth (left) and Madge, about 1920.

11/12/27. Mrs. R. M. Hart and daughter Madge motored to Monroe Thursday afternoon to see the doctor. Madge is improving nicely.

12/1/27. There was an oyster supper for the cornhuskers at the C. C. Core home.

**1928.** 1/12/28. There were four carloads of cattle shipped from Cordova Tuesday. C.C. Core and Joe Muilenberg shipped one carload of hogs. Loren Stevenson shipped two carloads of hogs, and Paul Harp shipped one car load of cattle.

1/12/28. C. C. Core has finished putting up his ice for summer.

1/19/28. Reese Wolf of Knoxville was in Cordova Friday. Wolf was showing off a new Chevrolet.

1/26/28. George Roff had the misfortune of breaking his arm Sunday while cranking his car.

1/23/28. Johnny Leuty came from Knoxville Tuesday evening, left his car in Mr. Williamson's garage, and took the train (*12 miles*) to Percy. The roads being so bad, he thought he couldn't get through.

3/28/28. R. M. Hart and Henry Merryman were Knoxville shoppers Saturday. Henry was stepping around here with some new harness getting ready for field work.

*No Cordova columns from March 28, 1928, until February 20, 1930.*



Friends and neighbors, 1st row, l-r: Mabel Ford, Charles Ford, Delight Karr Wing, Joy Shilling. 2nd row, l-r: Roy Karr, "Skinny" Shilling. (Bill Karr)

## IV

**CORDOVA IN THE 1930s: THE GREAT DEPRESSION**

*When Grace Karr resumed her writing in 1930 after a year and a half, she seemed to have "loosened up" a bit in her writing, though her best was yet to come. She writes in a chatty fashion. She is better able to put her own feelings into her writing. Perhaps she had gained new insights as a result of her new role as farmer's wife and parent within the community.*

*She depicts the hard depression years and the droughts and chinch bugs of the 30s and also the 1936 "snow of the century," and how Cordovans coped. They did not complain. True, farmers suffered less than city folks during the depression because they had garden produce and home-produced meat, milk, and eggs. They could cut firewood from the timber for their fuel.*

*Methods and hazards of farming are depicted. Well-known institutions of the time such as threshing parties and charivaris are recorded. Recreational activities, most of which were generated from within the community, are described.*

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**1930.** 2/27/30. The first meadow lark arrived sometime in the night Thursday.

3/6/30. Mr. and Mrs. Ralph Hart were in Knoxville Friday on business. Roy Karr (*Grace's husband*) stayed in the store while they were gone.

3/6/30. It's maple syrup time. Mr. William Karr has been collecting sap to the amount of several gallons, and Mrs. Karr has been boiling it down into delicious maple syrup.

4/10/30. Miss Blanche Karr had a real April Fool surprise for her pupils last week. Just as soon as they had eaten their lunch and gone out to play, she rang the bell calling them back. Here they came marching in with long faces, but only to smile after each received a big popcorn ball.

1/12/28. C. C. Core has finished putting up his ice for summer.

1/19/28. Reese Wolf of Knoxville was in Cordova Friday. Wolf was showing off a new Chevrolet.

1/26/28. George Roff had the misfortune of breaking his arm Sunday while cranking his car.

1/23/28. Johnny Leuty came from Knoxville Tuesday evening, left his car in Mr. Williamson's garage, and took the train (*12 miles*) to Percy. The roads being so bad, he thought he couldn't get through.

3/28/28. R. M. Hart and Henry Merryman were Knoxville shoppers Saturday. Henry was stepping around here with some new harness getting ready for field work.

*No Cordova columns from March 28, 1928, until February 20, 1930.*



Friends and neighbors, 1st row, l-r: Mabel Ford, Charles Ford, Delight Karr Wing, Joy Shilling. 2nd row, l-r: Roy Karr, "Skinny" Shilling.

(Bill Karr)

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4/10/30. Mr. and Mrs. Roy Karr celebrated their fifth wedding anniversary at their home Saturday evening, April 5. The evening was spent in playing cards, and then a two-course luncheon was served. They were presented with a beautiful magazine rack to remember the occasion.

*Community concern.* 4/15/30. On Tuesday forenoon, the men of the community went with discs, harrows, and corn planters to plant the corn for Mrs. Henry Merryman (*her husband had died a couple of weeks before*). Sixteen neighbors helped. (*See item of 3/28/28*).

*Children shared in family responsibilities.* 7/3/30. A week ago Saturday, little Miss Marjorie Bricker, age 11, performed a feat very few girls could accomplish, even those who are much older. Her mother was gone to Missouri, and the job fell upon Marjorie's shoulder to get dinner for 8 hay men all by herself. She did, preparing meat, potatoes, lettuce, green beans, peaches, little cakes she baked herself, and pies her mother had made the day before. Then that afternoon she prepared the lunch to serve. Junella Vanden Berg helped her some. Then there was the regular Saturday's cleaning work to be done besides.

7/14/30. Several farmers are starting to cut their fall wheat. It's a beautiful scene to stand on the hills and look out over the river bottom at the fields of ripening wheat and oats, mingled with the green corn, clover, and alfalfa fields. Quite different from a few weeks ago when the water from the creeks and river covered the fields.

9/11/30. Roy and W. R. Karr (Roy's father) had their clover hulled Tuesday evening. Mr. Sneller had his threshed on Tuesday and Wednesday, and Mr. Henry Muilenberg on Thursday. The crop is light, but we can be thankful the grasshoppers didn't get it all. Mrs. Lloyd Powers helped Mrs. Roy Karr with the lunch for clovers hullers on Tuesday. Mrs. Hazel Bricker helped Mrs. Henry Muilenberg.

*The older of the two Cordova stores, Dutch Hart's store, was a gathering place especially on Saturday night. Women came to shop and visit, while the men smoked and talked about how the crops were doing, and the children were chasing each other around outside.* 9/11/30. R. M. "Dutch" Hart has built an addition to the north side of the his store in the form of a new barber shop.

9/18/30. Mr. A. E. Cronkhite (*Billy Gene's grandfather*) and Mr. and Mrs. Lloyd Powers were at the Roy Karr home for dinner Saturday in honor of Billy Gene's third birthday. Howard Klein came to play with Billy Gene Saturday morning.

11/25/30. On Monday night a group of people joined in a charivari (*banging of tin pans, etc.*) for newlyweds Mr. and Mrs. Willie Kelderman. They were treated to cigars and candy bars.

10/23/30. Birds of many kinds have been seen in flocks flying south especially crows, blackbirds, robins, flickers, and also ducks. Lots of hunters are busy trying to shoot them along the river, and it resulted in several roasted ducks and dressing.

**1933.** Grace refers to this tragedy in her life several times during the years. (7/22/54) July 14, 1933, my only sister Gustia died after a major operation at the Mater Hospital in Knoxville at 31 years of age (*Grace was 35*). I kept the lonely vigil all night with a nurse coming in and out, and she died at 7:30 a.m. on that Thursday morning. A severe electrical storm occurred during the night, and it made the last hours a very sad and sorrowful time. Well do we remember her jovial laugh and her love for all little children. She had none of her own. She is buried in Indiana Chapel Cemetery south of Attica beside our mother who died three years before.



(Reda Martin Van Zante)

Gustia (left) and Grace Cronkhite, about 1920.

*Farmers were very hard up.* 9/7/33. George Dailey, the mail carrier, has purchased a new Plymouth. The farmers can't buy one, but the mail carriers can yet.

**1934.** 6/21/34. The chinch bugs are quite bad around here. They are in the grain and going for the corn now. Some farmers are busy with oil and trenchers.

10/25/34. The late potatoes came out pretty good. Neal Kuiken got about 350 bushels.

*Reminiscing 20 years later about the bad roads of the '30s.* 3/3/55. Monday, February 14, Murray and Lorena Van Hemert had been married 20 years. Roads were impassable that day in 1935 so Cal Bricker took them out to Highway 14 in the wagon.

**1936. A distressing omen.** 1/16/36. The Cordova depot was closed January 1. Lloyd Shilling, our agent, was sent to Stratham, a small town in Mills County. He writes home that it has 3 small stores and a consolidated school about the size of Percy. His hours are long as he hangs mail at 6 a.m. and 10 p.m. His wife and son are still living in Cordova.

1/16/36. Roy Karr is the custodian here at our Cordova depot now.

1/16/36. Mr. and Mrs. Murray Van Hemert called Thursday evening on Mrs. and Mrs. Roy Karr. The men went rabbit hunting in the moonlight.

*The hard winter of 1936.* 1/30/36. Wednesday during the blizzard, the eight chimneys of Cordova were belching smoke. No cars were on Primary 14. Snow plows removed snow both Wednesday and Thursday. The mail carrier could cover only part of his route. Only four pupils in school. Telephones were much in use.

2/6/36. Several of the youngsters thought it wasn't too cold to coast Sunday afternoon. They had a lot of fun, but it resulted in some sickness. Forest Dailey missed school 3 days with a severe cold, and Billy Gene Karr missed too. Angie Klyn was sick the first of the week.

*Brrr.* 2/6/36. Even when it's 14 degrees below zero, Murray Van Hemert went swimming in his water tank. He stepped on the rim of the tank with one foot, using the other to break the ice, and "splash" he went with both feet. Forest Core fell in the old slough, too, while they were putting up ice.

2/13/36. Clarence Bricker had two sheep get frozen in a snow drift. Arthur Johnson had a horse die. Murray Van Hemert lost two calves because of cows being vaccinated for tuberculosis.

2/20/36. Everyone was snowbound Sunday, Monday, and Tuesday. We saw no cars today. The early train that goes through at 4:55 a.m. came in at 7:15 p.m. The snow plow went over the railroad tracks twice. It is out every day. All trains carry double headers (two engines). Cordova depot is full of neighbors waiting for their Sunday papers. The farmers are helping to shovel snow every day to keep the roads open. We get snow nearly every day, and the wind blows the roads full. Neighbors have been relaying the mail from house to house. Red Rock, Fifield, and Fair Oaks schools have been closed all week.

2/20/36. Lloyd Shilling had lots of coal spilled on the railroad tracks last week, 7 carloads. It was guarded to keep thieves away. The truckers that do reach the neighbors here divide a load up between two and three people. One neighbor was living by the heater and cooking on an oil stove.

2/20/36. Tuesday evening the young daughter of Henry Kool had convulsions. The roads were impassable for the doctor. They called him, and he said to immerse the child in warm water with cold water on her head. The mother

was washing the dishes, so into the dishpan went the child, clothes and all. In all seriousness, every mother must remember what to do in case of convulsions.

2/27/36. Peter Van Ghents have purchased a new radio, which should be very much appreciated this stormy weather.

2/27/36. The farmers meet the stock trucks with their hogs on a bobsled. They meet the oil man, cream truck, and the coal trucks all at the end of the secondary roads. Some roads are even impassable for sleds.

*The second of the two Cordova stores.* 2/27/36. Mr. and Mrs. Charley Ford have purchased the goods in the H. C. Williamson store. They are cleaning it up and arranging to sell new fresh goods, too.

2/27/36. Charley Ford went to Des Moines Saturday to buy a supply of groceries to stock up the store. A nice lot of sales have been made, and people are glad to take advantage of the bargains. In cleaning around on the old "gum machine," it was found that it contained 62 pennies.

3/5/36. The attendance at Red Rock Sunday School on Sunday was 29, and the collection was 69 cents.

3/5/36. George Dailey purchased a horse to ride on the mail route when roads are impassable.

*Relief from the deep snows at last!* 3/5/36. Mr. and Mrs. Calvin Bricker visited Friday with their daughter Mrs. Murray Van Hemert and husband. Everybody is surely taking advantage of the open roads. They were shut up so long it's like turning a bird out of its cage.

3/19/36. The Raleigh man was in Cordova Saturday.

3/19/36. Four 8th grade pupils from the northern part of the county were given a special 8th grade examination at Red Rock School under Miss Batten's supervision. These pupils were unable to attend the regular examinations in February because of snowbound roads and mumps. (*The County examinations were a requirement for graduation from 8th grade.*)

3/19/36. Miss Sarah Jane Templeton was re-elected to teach the Red Rock School for the following year. We are glad to secure her again. Her record for this year has been very good, and all patrons are well satisfied.



Sarah Jane Templeton

(Jean Visser McKay)

3/26/36. Donald Balmer finished his 8th grade examinations with a high average. In Hygiene his grade was 100 percent.

3/26/36. The housewives have been swinging the brooms and dust rags, cleaning house. (*a twice-a-year ritual*)

4/9/36. Patricia Ann Dailey accidentally got hold of a box of Ex-Lax and ate several. She was rushed to the doctor Wednesday evening, but no ill effects resulted. They think she fed part of them to "Tiny" her dog.

4/16/36. Miss Ethel Bricker is spending this week with her parents. They are cleaning house. On Thursday, Mrs. Bricker's other daughters came, and they papered the dining room.

4/16/36. Mr. and Mrs. George Dailey entertained at their second Wearever (*aluminum*) dinner Thursday night. Another Wearever dinner was held at the Charley Ford home Friday evening.

5/28/36. Billy Gene Karr, Gene Reed, and Robert Hanning spent Tuesday night with their teacher Sarah Jane Templeton.

5/28/36. Red Rock school closed Friday with a picnic dinner at noon. A large crowd was present. A hike to the rock quarry was taken in the afternoon. The youngsters will enjoy their vacation, but you'll see them all ready next fall.

7/23/36. All the kids of Cordova have been enjoying the swimming hole on the Leuty farm.

7/23/36. The threshing crew from east of Cordova have threshed grain at the Kuiper, De Jong, Uitermarkt, Ryken, Hoksbergen, Vander Berg, Van Ghent, Van Hemert, Karr, and Wynsteker farms and are now at the the M. P. Van Hemert farm. The grain is very dry and threshes easily. Kuiper's made 30 bushels per acre. De Jong's 31 (*poor yields*).

*The threshing party was one of the biggest social events of a summer.* 7/30/36. Mr. and Mrs. Gerrit Hoksbergen and Mr. and Mrs. Frank Poortinga and son Ralph were hosts to the neighbors of this community at an ice cream social Friday evening on the lawn at the Hoksbergens. All the guests thoroughly enjoyed the heaped up dishes of home made ice cream topped with strawberry preserves and angel food cake. "Hoksy" said he got mighty tired cranking all the freezers. But just the same, all the guests are grateful for the party, and everyone who assisted in any way are to be thanked. After next year's threshing is over, we will look for another celebration.

*The summer of 1936 was as hot and dry as the winter had been cold and snowy.* 7/30/36. Saturday afternoon Hugh Templeton rushed in here with a call for the section men to hurry to the Joe Templeton and Loren Stevenson pastures along the railroad right of way. A fire started by 11 o'clock was raging, and they could not get it under control. It had burned until 1 o'clock before it was discovered. Help was rushed from the gravel pit, and two truck loads of C.C.C. boys from Knoxville came. The black smoke rolled like a forest fire. The train that went at 2 o'clock set another fire here by Cordova near Primary 14. We need to be watching the tracks and be very careful of matches and fire.

7/30/36. Ruth Hart gave the members of her class at Sunday School little "sunbeam" pins for attending Sunday school three Sundays straight. The attendance last Sunday was fair with a collection of 94 cents.

7/30/36. Kate Karr is at the Newton hospital. She has contracted some kind of stomach poison which caused continuous vomiting. It is thought to have been caused by taking the last dose of cod liver in a bottle.

*Eleanor Roosevelt passes through Cordova.* 9/10/36. Thursday night every one was all excited about the President's special car which was to go over the track. Some were able to stay awake and see. Others were awakened by the shrill blasts of the whistles and raised up in bed to see a streak of light pass swiftly by. We had an agent for the occasion, and wires and a telegraph sounder were put in. An extra section crew of 13 men are stationed in Cordova. They live in railroad cars. Thursday, our regular section crew patrolled the track until after the President's train left.

9/17/36. Joe Templeton finished filling his large pit silo. Cecil Reese filled his large one. Clyde Core is preparing a pit silo next week and building it above the ground with bales of straw. The men all work very hard, and it's really a worse job than threshing.

9/2/36. William Karr had an old horse die Saturday. The Reasnor rendering truck came to pick it up. When the truck arrived, it already contained 3 dead horses. Then there were 2 other orders left there for men to pick them up, one horse at the Ora Dekker farm and a valuable mare at Mel Koor's that had died. So that is a total of seven horses in this community in a short while.

10/22/36. Delos Vanden Berg can be thankful for his life. While discing with four horses, he was standing on the disc. A piece of harness broke, and the horse gave a lunge throwing him from the disc and under it in a position he couldn't help himself in any way. He hung on to the lines, and the horses stopped. His father, in passing on the road in his car, just happened to see him waving frantically for help and went to his assistance.

*Barn raising bee.* 10/22/36. James Templeton is constructing a new barn on the farm where he resides. It is to take the place of the one demolished by the wind storm last summer. John Sedrel, B. A. Vos, Perry Brown, Rodney Black, Roy Karr, Lynn Perkey, and Joe and Hugh Templeton are working on the new barn. They expect to have it completed next week.

10/29/36. Alice Visser was a busy farm manager Monday. She had her chickens culled and cattle and hogs vaccinated.

10/29/36. On Friday night, October 30, the Aid will serve a chicken dinner at the church for 35 cents a plate. The menu consists of creamed chicken, mashed potatoes, hot biscuits, sweet potatoes, cabbage salad, jelly, tomatoes, pickles, pumpkin pie, and coffee.

11/19/36. Sarah Jane Templeton will have an auction of pies at her school program on Monday night, November 23.

*An inside joke.* 11/26/36. There have been several coon hunting parties on nights during the past week. George Dailey and Dave Baumgardner have captured one coon. One night up in the Hodson timber, Dailey got lost. It must have been a good joke. We don't know whether he used the Big Dipper to find his way out or not.

12/3/36. At the program at Red Rock school Monday night, \$13.65 was collected. They sold candy, popcorn, pieces of pie, and coffee. Part of the pies were auctioned off. They went high.

12/10/36. George Dailey turned cook one day last week. He put a beef roast in the pressure cooker and never put the rim on and clamped the lid down. The pressure grew so great it shot the lid to the ceiling and broke a lot of plaster. The lid then glanced to the side wall and broke off more plaster, and then flew on to the opposite side of the kitchen. Suet and beef were all over the ceiling and walls.

**1938.** 3/3/38. A special passenger passed over the Wabash Sunday evening and back Monday morning. It was reported that they were carrying students from Columbia University of Missouri.

*Signs of decline.* 9/1/38. Paul Harp has been hauling away truck loads of the old foundation where the old Cordova store used to stand.

12/28/38. The men who bought the Cordova depot will tear it down and ship it out on the Wabash.

**1939.** 2/11/39. Since the heavy snow we see a few hunters. When it stops snowing, the fox hunters will start. We heard the plaintive call of quails, too. There is nothing for them to eat.

## V

## THE 1940s IN CORDOVA: THE WAR YEARS

*Life changed dramatically during this decade. Never again would the Cordova community be so homogenous with almost everyone living out their whole lives on a farm within the community, or so self contained and separate from outside influences. World War II changed all that. Sons from almost every family left for different parts of the U. S. and foreign countries. They saw different ways of life, and brought new thoughts, and even a foreign bride back into the community, when they returned. Anguish followed when one of their number was injured or killed in the war. Meanwhile on the home front, there was not a person who was not involved in the war effort. Cordovans worked very hard and suffered privation during the war. Patriotism was at a high level.*

*At home, the most significant event was the flood of 1947. The damage was so great that a great controversy began and was to last over a decade as to what should be done to control future disasters. Their schoolhouse, nerve center of the community was ill-fated too; it burned down, was rebuilt, and then suffered severe damage from the flood.*

*Despite the war, the events recorded by Mrs. Karr were for the most part involved with farming and its seasonal routine, the role of the school and the church, and bringing up families.*

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**1940.** Decline. 10/10/40. The Cordova depot is torn down, and all the material hauled away. Five men worked all six days last week tearing it down.

**1941.** 2/29/41. Mrs. Calvin Bricker caught a civet cat in a trap in her basement. Then with a lot of courage and holding her nose, she carried it outside and threw it in the yard. Then, the man of the house who wasn't very brave until he got the gun, destroyed Mr. Civet Cat.

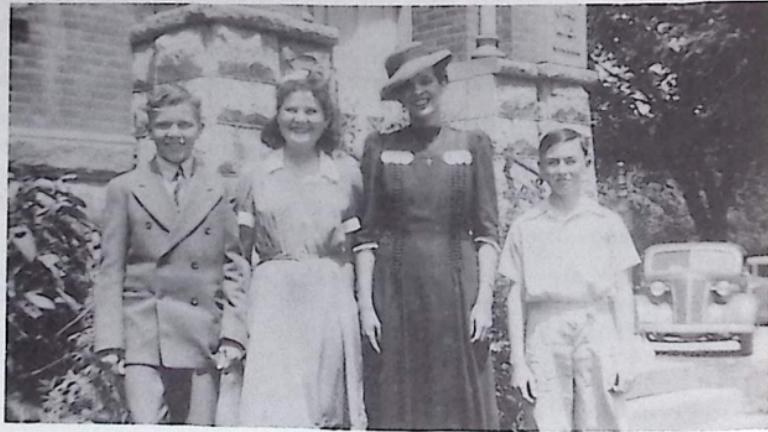
3/13/41. More than 30 head of cattle were dehorned at the Clyde Core farm on Tuesday. Some of the neighbors drove their cattle there, and the work was done all at one time.

3/27/41. On Saturday afternoon we stopped at the sawmill near the river bridge for lumber. One of the managers is Roy Coe. They were sawing at the time, and it was quite interesting. These men are noted for the fine job they do, and the many board feet they are able to get out of a log.

*Leading citizen in terrible accident.* 3/17/41. R. M. "Dutch" Hart got both bones in his leg broken some place above the shoe top, when a log chain broke while they were pulling stumps on the farm. He was taken to the Veterans' Hospital in Des Moines. He suffers much pain, and nothing has been done to his leg as yet, only x-ray pictures taken. Visitors are permitted to see him on Wednesday night once a week. He will need to be there three months.

5/15/41. You can't take a walk far enough in the woods away from civilization after mushrooms and to enjoy wild cherry blossoms and the wild flowers without an airplane droning over your head. And if you stay out there four or five hours, you'll hear three or four planes.

5/22/41. A nice group attended the school at Red Rock Friday. Colleen Alley, Robert Poston, and Billy Gene Karr completed the 8th grade. They received graduation gifts from their teacher Mrs. Perkey has taught Red Rock two years. She went to Dallas (Iowa) to her home on the farm with her husband. She will not teach next year.



(Bill Karr)

Robert Poston, Colleen Alley, Mrs. Ruth Perkey, Billy Gene Karr.

**1942. First mention of the War:** 3/26/42. A garden meeting was held at the home of Gertrude Hoksgaen on Thursday afternoon. Each family plans to produce more food for home use to let all factory canned goods go to feed our armies and help starving nations. Anyone wanting the Victory Garden leaflet may get it here in my home.

*Spring work must go on.* 4/9/42. If anyone wants a job, step into anyone's home, and find the women busy at making cheese and soap, cleaning, papering, gardening, caring for chicks, pet lambs, and pigs, or see the men spreading lime, hauling machinery, sowing oats, planting potatoes, burning cornstalks, and most anything else. It's such a busy time.



(Bill Karr)

Roy, Billy Gene, and Grace Karr on the farm.

4/23/42. Mrs. Jessie Bruce was hired to teach the Red Rock school the coming year. The school board will begin building a fence around the school yard on Monday morning to keep out the cattle. The fence was to have been built last year.

5/7/42. Fair Oaks school will be closed Tuesday so the people of the district may get their sugar rationing books then. Red Rock school has three days' vacation for rationing.

*Farm report not so good.* 5/28/42. Otto Wynsteker lost a cow that became fastened in the roots of a tree on the creekland. Ed Ver Ploeg lost a mare that mired down in the ditch. They had to raise her two-day colt by hand. Dick Ver Ploeg lost a ewe and her lambs when the hogs killed her. Roy Karr had a cow that has four calves.

6/4/42. Huff Mikesell was home from Friday until Sunday from the CCC camp at Corydon. For a while there were only 30 boys, but its number increased to 50. On Tuesday, they will be transferred to Kaiser, Missouri, to work for 5 months.

6/4/42. Several people are hurriedly taking some trips to see close relatives before gas rationing goes into effect and to bid farewell to brothers and others who are off for the army and navy. Everyone drives more slowly and saves tires and gas and accidents.

6/13/42. So many men have been drafted or gone into defense jobs that merchants and farmers are short of help. There has already been one day when haying that the farmers were not able to get enough help.

6/13/42. A troop train of 13 cars went south Wednesday.

6/13/42. A total of 64 carloads of ore went through here on Monday on the Wabash. There are as many as three extra trains per day, so cross the crossing with the unexpected train in mind. The lights come on 16 seconds before the train is in sight.

*Summer is busy, too.* 6/25/42. Some have finished putting away their first crop of alfalfa. Part of the red clover is cut. Last week was an ideal week's weather for hay. Some corn is laid by after having been plowed twice. Rains and haying have put the farmer behind, and he's about worked to death.



Dwight Harvey, and wife Sarah Jane (Templeton), and daughter Celia, early 1940s.

(Jean Visser McKay)

7/16/42. Sarah Jane Harvey spent several days with her mother canning raspberries.

7/23/42. Huff Mikesell was discharged from the CCC camp at Bradyville, Missouri, and returned home on Friday. All camps are being disbanded.

7/23/42. Hugh Templeton is a member of the home guard group in Knoxville.

7/30/42. Another troop train went through here. It's hard to realize the seriousness of our war conditions.

7/30/42. We know there's lots of old iron and rubber and other defense articles not gathered up yet, but it's such a busy time. We need to work even longer hours and harder to accomplish it all.

9/17/42. John Martin Visser's wife (*first wife*) was to go to the Visser home one day this week and take Alice Visser to a southern camp to visit her son John Martin. He is learning to be a bombardier.

*It's fall again.* 10/8/42. Arie Waardhuizen is cutting corn for Roy Karr with the binder. The corn dried extra fast because of our early hard freeze. The leaves of the trees will not last long. Saturday and Sunday it rained down leaves in storms. We never saw the like before. So better enjoy the timber now.

10/8/42. The Flower Club met with Ethelyn Core two weeks ago, and they will not meet again until after the duration of the war.

**1943.** 1/14/43. Tuesday evening, friends of Chester Bricker gathered at his home to bid him farewell. Most everyone wrote him a letter to be opened on a future date and gave him a one-cent postcard to answer with. They presented him with a service kit, navy stationery, and a shoe shining kit. That night Chester's parents drove him to Des Moines where he left on a train for Kansas City. Another boy from Pella boarded the same train. They reported for duty Wednesday at 9 a.m. and had a physical test, and from 11:00 until 4:00 p.m. they had leave of absence to see the sights. Then back to Union Station for supper, and they left at 7 p.m. aboard a sleeper and would arrive at camp by 7 the next morning.

2/18/43. The afternoon freight train on the Wabash killed a heifer that belonged to Herman De Heer and his mother on Monday.

2/25/43. On Thursday Grandma Hart went outside for a walk in the yard of her son Raymond's home, and her leg gave way, and she fell on the cement walk. She was taken to the Pleasantville Hospital on Friday. An x-ray picture was taken, and they found the bone was broken below the hip. Sandbags were used to weigh it down.

3/4/43. Mr. and Mrs. Pete Van Hemert went to Pleasantville Tuesday to see Grandma Hart. She visited with them that afternoon, but Wednesday she became unconscious. Her condition remains the same. Sunday, she had rallied again.

3/4/43. The newlyweds, Mr. and Mrs. Hugh Templeton, were charivariated twice last week.



(Dorothy Templeton)

Newlyweds Dorothy and Hugh Templeton, 1943.

*"Grandma" Hart was the last remaining link with the earliest days of Cordova. A new generation would not remember the rigors and the values of pioneer life.* 3/11/43. Grandma Hart died Saturday at 9:00 p.m., March 6, at the age of 89 years. Funeral services were held at the Red Rock Methodist Church... Her body was laid to rest in the North Cemetery (*Greenwood*) where she had chosen her lot years ago and erected the tombstone. Everyone knew her as a woman who worked hard and earned her way through life. She was always willing to help others and up to the last few years kept her hands busy at hard work until her eye sight failed. Even at Christmas time, she wrote her own Christmas letter.

Marjorie Elizabeth Wright Hart, daughter of E. R., and Nancy A. Wright was born in Red Rock, January 31, 1854, and departed to be with her Lord March 6, 1943. She received her education in the Red Rock school and Central College in Pella. She taught her first school at Ora Dell. In 1881 she was united in marriage to John M. Hart and to this union 9 children were born. She also took Sara Davis to raise when she was nine years and kept her until she was 22.



(Ruth Hart Perkey)

Four generations. Grandma Mary Hart, "Dutch" Hart, Ruth Perkey, baby Charlotte Perkey.

Mrs. Hart built the first store in the first house in Cordova. They wanted a post office in Cordova. She had it in one corner of her living room. At one time she had 29 boarders, and it was so crowded they could hardly get around the table. The boarders were men who worked on the railroad as well as on the switch to the Red Rock quarry, and men from the quarry, as railroads did not have cook cars then. She started the first grocery store and kept the groceries under her bed.



(Ruth Hart Perkey)

Farmstead of John and Mary Hart. First store and first post office in Cordova, 1887.  
l-r: Ralph "Dutch," mother Mary, Raymond, father John, Clarence.

She became a member of the Methodist Church of Red Rock when she was 16 years old and lived a Christian life thereafter. Her motto through life was to do as much good as possible and as little harm as possible.

4/15/43. The total amount collected for the Red Cross work from the 25 families in this area was \$62.25. We must still dig deep and deeper for war bonds and all. We are proud to do our small part.

4/22/43. Tommy De Moss quit work at the mine. "Tink" Buttery quit at the Veterans' Hospital. These two and Arthur Nichols and Roland Reed are now all employed in defense plants in Newton.

4/29/43. Nadine Reed and Colleen Deitrick hitchhike to Monroe each day to ride with Delight Wing to Newton as they all attend defense school.

8/12/43. Douglas Nichols, small son of Arthur Nichols, accidentally got his little finger cut off from his left hand in a bicycle chain his father was fixing. He never whimpered, and they didn't know it until Arthur had gone to Boyd's and back, and then his mother discovered it because Douglas said his finger hurt. It never bled. Arthur rushed him to a Monroe doctor in six minutes, but the doctor could not put it back on. This happened Friday evening.

8/19/43. When a tramp or beggar or anyone comes to your house for something to eat, you are to call the sheriff. There's no reason for anyone not to have a job some place all the time. He may be a spy, a prisoner, or convict, or what. So remember, we've had two in Cordova, but we did not know we should report to an officer.

9/23/43. Lost, strayed, or stolen from the farm belonging to the Cochrane estate north of Cordova some time since Friday, September 3, a three-year old Hereford bull, weighing about 1600 lbs. and is marked with two notches in left ear. A five dollar reward is offered for him, dead or alive.

9/23/43. Three manure spreaders hauled 80 loads of manure from the lots on the Joe Templeton farm one day last week. They were loaded with a tractor fitted up with a shovel attached to the front, similar to a drag line effect. Very efficient.

9/30/43. The Hereford bull that disappeared from the Cochrane farm was found alive in the same timber pasture three weeks after last seen. He had the pink eye.

10/14/43. We have had as many as three extra trains in one day, so stop, look and listen! Regularly we have 2 passenger and 4 freight trains a day. All are long trains and loaded heavy, some carrying 28 car loads of ore each day. Another thing that should be better known to patrons who intend to board the train going either way at Cordova station, is that now it stops only after being flagged down. You can use a lantern, flashlight, or lighted newspaper, or Roy Karr, the custodian, will provide you with a lantern. Start flagging as soon as the train light comes into view from either direction because its speed is so great it needs the distance to stop in. The engineer will answer you with a little "toot-toot," and then you'll know he sees you. Many times he gets past

and needs to back up. Many more people are riding the train nowadays. The night train is due here 8:48 p.m. and the morning train at 4:48 a.m.

10/21/43 Mrs. Bart Klyn and Mrs. Wynsteker have been making cheese. We better all be learning how.

*Recalling the end of World War I.* 11/4/43. Armistice Day always recalls the stories of how we made torches, gathered up the old tubs and buckets and marched to Cordova at 5 a.m. to wake up the people to report the good news after we heard the general ring on the Otley telephone line. The Wabash section men put all their torpedoes on the track to celebrate, but only part exploded. The train was a train load of hogs.

11/25/43. Jim Van Hemert returned to his camp in the East on Wednesday. It seems that when the boys are home, there's so many to see and time so short with the saving of gas and tires, and everyone so terribly busy with loads of work on everyone's shoulder equal to what four or more should do, so that lots of friends are unable to get together, even if their intentions are for the same.

11/25/43. One day so many bombers passed by that we shouted "Hurray!" And then you pause and feel sad because it means death to our enemies.

12/16/43. Everyone is urged to write to all service men, all you can. It's our duty. I have always made it a point to get all the addresses and keep up with the changes and send them in my news to the Chronicle. The editor sees fit not to publish them so as not to aid the enemy. And for my part, neither do I want to aid them either, but I'll still get you all I can and will mail them to anyone who wants them.

*To add to the problems of an already overworked population:* 12/23/43. The Red Rock school house burned to the ground on Tuesday, December 14, at about 5:00 p.m. When the fire was discovered by Mrs. Ted Butterly, and the warning was sounded, the attic was so full of smoke no one could enter. They could have saved the building if the blaze could have been located. A hole was chopped in the roof near the chimney, and this gave it a draft which ended things. They were equipped with four fire extinguishers. Everything was taken from inside the school room before it was ever on fire inside. The cause of the fire is not known. The teacher, Jessica Bruce, had no fire in the stove. She does not bank but builds a new fire each day. The school board met Wednesday night, and made plans for the future. There will be no school this coming week. The building that burned was built in 1910. The building previous to this one burned, too, and it was thought it had been set on fire to attract attention to it, as the Cordova store was robbed the same night.

12/23/43. A total of 20 carloads of Christmas trees have now been shipped through here. The youngsters of Cordova made a trip to the woods last Sunday and gathered their trees. They also captured a screech owl and brought him home.

1944. 1/6/44. Red Rock school board met last Tuesday night at the Riherd home. No decisions were made, just the type of school house was discussed. One suggestion was that they continue school in the church until victory was won, and

then better material could be bought and would be more plentiful. The district will vote on the bonds at a later date. The permit to build was applied for.

*Believe it or not!* 1/6/44. Clarence Bricker found the hog he lost in the creek in his pasture. The sod on the creek bank had caved off and so caught the pig lying flat on his back with his four feet in the air between the frozen chunks. He had been there more than one week but was still alive, and could not walk or open his mouth at first and had lost 50 lbs. The skin and flesh on his back all came off, but he still came out of it after having special feed and care.

1/6/44. The kids and many of their fathers and other young married men have been having great sport skating on the pond at Ed Klyn's and up at the old slough.

4/20/44. The USWA (*Women's Auxiliary*) met with Bessie Haning on Wednesday. Six were present, and they completed two comforts, and they worked on "fracture pillows" for the wounded service men.

6/1/44, The Des Moines River has been out of its banks since Saturday, the highest since 1903. There are 26 families in Red Rock and water was in nearly every house. The total damage to the fields will never be estimated correctly. We will have to work harder than ever to overcome this tragedy. We are still better off than warring Europe. The wild animals and varmints were seeking shelter along the railroad track on high ground. Herman De Heer and Harold Karr killed more than 14 ground hogs. The gopher army was enormous. Snakes squirm everywhere with mice and rabbits. One mother skunk carried her babies to safety one by one.

6/15/44. A prayer meeting was held at the Red Rock Church Tuesday evening for D-Day invasion.

*The toll of war.* 7/20/44. Word came last Friday to the Blaine Core family that their son Willis Core was missing in action somewhere in the European front. Mr. and Mrs. Hugh Templeton (sister), went to the Core home, and Mrs. Templeton remained until Sunday. They still have hope that he may be a prisoner of war.

8/3/44. Friday, word came to Dorothy Templeton that her brother Willis Core was a German prisoner.

12/21/44. Red Rock school will be held in the church again this fall for the present.

12/21/44. Mrs. Dorothy Templeton again received word of her brother Willis. This time the International Red Cross notified the parents, Mr. and Mrs. Blaine Core, that he was dead. First he was reported missing, then a prisoner. All the crew on the bomber in which he was the pilot were destroyed in German territory. His parents received his medal.

**1945.** 1/4/45. Happy New Year to everyone and let us all resolve to do our best so this horrible war can be won in 1945.

2/22/45. All the families of the neighborhood, except two, gathered at Arie Waardhuizen's Thursday to bid them farewell. "Weenis" holds quite an unusual

record. All the years of his life have been spent on the farm which he is leaving, and every night of his life he has slept there. 3/1/45. Various neighbors helped "Weenis" move to their new home.

*A man to be admired.* 3/15/45 Pete Van Hemert's death came as a great shock because he was seriously ill only one week. For some time, he was not well, but he always suffered in silence. He was always ready to help where asked. He never interfered in other people's affairs. All his life was spent on the farm except two years when he lived in Knoxville and three years in Cordova. He took great pride doing all his work with extreme care. Some of his hobbies were his yard and lawn and having a place for everything. He had equipped his garage with tools and electrical machinery and did a lot of repair and woodwork. His grin, "ha! ha!" and "my gosh" will long be remembered by us as well as his kindness. He was born in Holland, March 29, 1879, and died March 8, 1945, at 65 years. Burial was in Dunreath cemetery.

5/19/45. The late President Roosevelt's death was a great shock to our neighborhood. We should just pause to respect his memory and then resolve to carry on peace forever in the future as he strived to bring about and gave his life for us as our service men are dying, too.

*Mrs. Karr did not write overmuch about her immediate family (maybe they wouldn't let her), but she could not resist reporting the honors won by her son Bill and his fiance, Darlene, at high school graduation.* 5/24/45. Mr. and Mrs Roy Karr attended the commencement program of the Monroe High School Senior Class of 1945 held at the Methodist Church, Friday evening, May 18. Darlene Ballard was the valedictorian. Darlene Ballard and Bill Karr were chosen as the girl and boy who held the highest places in the 4 Square group with personality, grades, service, and character used as the basis of selecting.

6/7/45. Many carloads of raw iron ore are going down the Wabash and may mean long years of war ahead. We still need to buy more war bonds.

6/7/45 A big surprise—a chickadee's nest was discovered in an old stump right by the path near the back door where we all pass daily. Now they have hatched. A Baltimore oriole nest hangs above our heads at the back door. The humming bird—female—comes to the honeysuckle many times throughout the day. Six eggs are in one swallow nest. The red bird has two eggs and fought a battle with a catbird this morning. The catbird was too near, I guess. The wrens fight until you think they'll never live. A big lazy old four-foot bullsnake was seen in the pasture, and the men left him to hunt mice.

7/12/45. Red Rock school house is going up fast. They have begun to shingle, and building paper is on the sides.

*The war is over!* 8/23/45. We are thankful for the victory that came last Tuesday evening. Tears of joy were shed but no hilarious celebrating. The boys who gave their lives for this victory deserve to be honored in a quiet way.

*Inductions continued for about another year.* 9/18/45. Billy Gene Karr was inducted and went to Ft. Snelling, Minnesota, Wednesday at 6:15 on the bus. Three other Marion County boys were in this group. In Des Moines, they boarded

a Great Northern train for St. Paul. The fort is located across the river from St. Paul and was established 125 years ago. The trip was interesting to them and exciting. They returned Saturday forenoon. Two hundred were examined at the same time. They were crowded, and the Marion County boys slept in double deck bunks in the field house.

9/20/45. Two barn swallows left the nest in the hen house two weeks ago. We wonder if they will ever be strong enough to fly south. We found out that they fly all around inside the building many days before they venture outside.

9/20/45. It's peach picking time coming to a close, and we are glad for all the bountiful crop, but how weary we are.

9/27/45. A rat killing record is held by the Waardhuizen family and their dog when they killed, dug out, and drowned 34 rats in a four-foot square in a few minutes.

10/18/45. As Leland and Larry Crozier were trapping gophers, they accidentally molested a bumble bee's nest. They were stung badly but went home and began to milk. First Leland became sick and fell unconscious, and in a few minutes Larry did likewise. They rushed them to the doctor where they were given shots, and it was midnight before they came to.

10/25/45. Friday, a good neighbor deed was performed by Margaret Van Den Berg and Mrs. Wm. Van Den Berg when they cooked for the silo fillers for "Beany" Perkey and cleaned up the Perkey home (*Mrs. Perkey had a new baby*).

10/25/45. Billy Gene Karr is called to leave for Ft. Snelling, Minnesota on Tuesday, November 6, for training.

10/25/45. Mr. and Mrs. Joe Templeton, Mr. and Mrs. Hugh Templeton, and daughter, and Mr. and Mrs. Clyde Karr and daughters called at Roy Karr's Monday to bid Billy Gene goodbye.

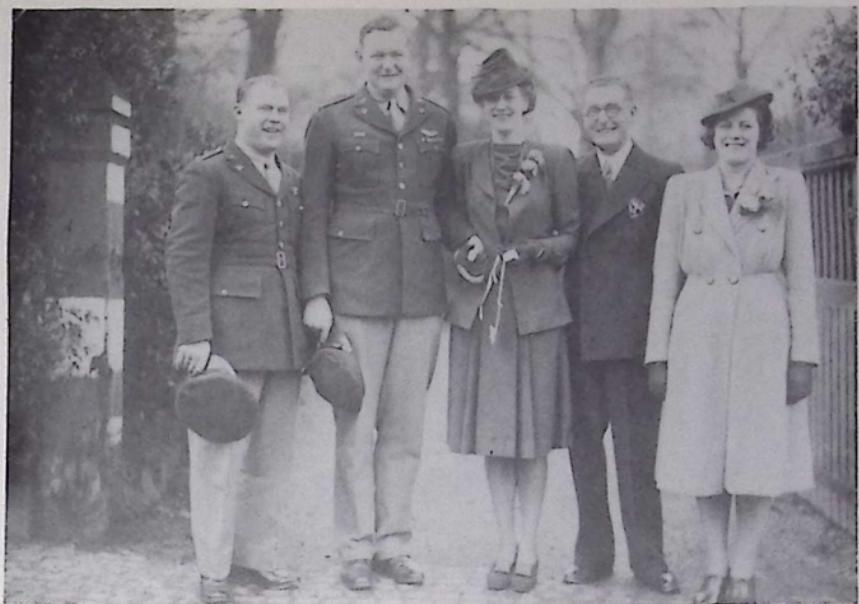
10/25/45. Chicken culling is in progress because it's time to get the henhouse and pullets ready for winter.

*After two years without a school house!* 10/25/45. A group of friends and neighbors gathered at the new Red Rock schoolhouse Friday evening to dedicate it. Mrs. Plotts, County Superintendent and Inspector of Rural Standard Schools, was present. Coffee, pie, and donuts were served.

11/29/45. Trappers were busy and having good luck until the hard freeze came. One mink is reported to have brought \$30 when sold.

12/20/45. This is a Christmas we can again feel like being merry, as of long ago. In spite of sorrow and sadness in homes even as yet, we must be glad anyway because the war is over.

**1946.** *This short news item recording the arrival of a foreign war bride marks the beginning of a succession of tragedies for that family during the next decade and a half:* 1/3/46. Mrs. John Martin Visser arrived in Chicago Saturday from England. Story was in this week's Sunday Des Moines Register.



(Jean Visser McKay)

John Visser and Harriet Hayton wedding, Leicester, England, Feb. 6, 1945. l-r: Shorty Hannes, the bridal couple, Stan Bingham, sister Dora Fullerton.

1/24/46. A friend of John Martin Visser and his wife visited at the Visser home Wednesday. They were driving from where he was discharged in Wyoming to their home in New Jersey. There will be more visitings like this of newly made friends, and the world will be no bigger than a few hours drive by plane to almost any place.

*Sport or protecting the hen house?* 2/14/46. A fox hunt was held Thursday in the timber near here. Almost 30 people were to take part. Two foxes were shot, but three escaped. Two brothers accidentally shot each other, but not seriously. The shot entered their faces.

2/14/46. Billy Gene Karr spent 3 days touring Washington D. C., walked up 896 steps to the top of the Washington Monument, and rode the elevator once, walked twice to the top of the nation's capital and went through the Smithsonian, the Lincoln Memorial, and the Aircraft Building.

*Trucks were slowly replacing the railroad:* 2/21/46. The Cordova stockyards are completely torn down.

3/28/46. Darlene Ballard will teach Red Rock school next year.

4/18/46. The older men of Red Rock played ball with their sons on Sunday afternoon. The game was not finished because all the bats were broken, and the older men were falling out of the game because of lack of endurance.



(Ruth Perkey)

Cordova stockyard and weigh station, elevator, garage, bank, and store, about 1915.

4/26/46. Joe Stevenson had a horse killed by the 10 o'clock passenger train Friday on the track north of Cordova.

5/9/46. Sheep shearers were at Murray Van Hemert's last Thursday.

*Flying was still a wonder!* 5/23/46. Pfc. Bill E. Karr arrived home Saturday from Ft. Monmouth, New Jersey, after being gone since last November 6. He flew by plane from New York to Chicago on a Mainliner which carried 45 passengers. The speed reached was 215 miles per hour and flying time was two hours and a few minutes. His furlough will last one month.

*Married while on furlough.* 5/30/46. Darlene Ballard, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Berlin Ballard of Monroe and Pfc. Bill E. Karr, son of Mr. and Mrs. Roy Karr of Cordova, were united in marriage at the M. E. Church. Freda Ballard and Harold Clark acted as witnesses. Anna Mae Ballard played the traditional wedding march by Wagner and *Star Dust* during the short, simple, double-ring ceremony. The bride wore a lime green wool suit and a corsage of pink talisman rose buds. The groom wore the regular army uniform. They left for a short honeymoon trip. The groom will return to his duties at Ft. Monmouth, N. J. on Friday night, June 14, at 8 o'clock p.m. by plane, a non-stop flight to New York.



(Bill Karr)

Darlene Ballard-Bill Karr wedding, 1946.

9/19/46. Hugh Templeton was injured last week when he was under a manure spreader greasing it, and his dad started up the tractor. The wheel ran across his chest.

11/28/46. The last letter from Bill Karr said he was sitting in a USO clubroom in Manila and could look out the window and see all the devastation of the bombings in the old walled city of Manila.

**1947.** 1/16/47. A tiny chickadee drowned in a pan of milk the other morning here. It was put out for the dog. We suppose the bird had previously lighted on the pan before when the milk was frozen, and then later flew in when it had melted. They are in the habit of picking in the dog pan to eat the other food. It was such a tiny little frail bird. They pick up a grain of corn and carry it to a limb where they hold it between their feet and pick out the heart.

4/17/47. Billy Gene Karr arrived home Tuesday night on the Wabash after spending 7 months overseas. He received his discharge. It seems there will be no end to the things to tell and talk about. He thinks our temperature is too cool, so many things have changed, and people have grown up.

4/17/47. Bill and Darlene Karr are preparing to live in the house in Cordova formerly owned by Sibyl Donahue. Roy Karr purchased the property. Papering, painting, plastering, and a new kitchen floor has to be completed before it is ready for occupancy.

*The flood of 1947 is now legendary. In Cordova, flood waters did not enter the houses. Red Rock people, however, had to flee their homes as the Des Moines River poured into their town. 6/12/47. On Wednesday night the creek was all over Cordova covering all of Highway 14 between the railroad crossing to the north bridge. The Wabash track was washed out. The brooder house at Roy Karr's was washed to the west with little chickens still in it in boxes. It did not get into the three houses in Cordova but was near their steps. Mathes had to have help to get cattle and chickens out because the river was overflowing. The excitement and strain almost exhausted everyone. We are glad the storm did not demolish our houses. The high waters and storms brought lots of stories but we can't write them now. We're thankful no lives were lost.*

6/12/47. The sheriff was called to Red Rock to aid in the evacuation. People seem to be so foolish to refuse to leave their homes because "The river has not got here before." It is dangerous to remain no matter if you are an "old river rat." Red Rock families were evacuated to the church which stood on slightly higher ground. The water reached the top step leading into the church by Friday morning.



Flood victims find refuge in Red Rock Church, 1947 flood.  
(Blanche Templeton)

6/12/47. We have had no trains since Wednesday. Thirty-one loads of gravel were hauled by train for ballast Sunday. Men worked all night. We can still say we're thankful.

6/26/47. The river is rising all over again the third time, and it's still rising. The terrible flood waters were almost one foot higher than last week, and it looks impossible to believe. The many families were all moving out and now—its clean up and move back.

6/26/47. A centrifugal pump has been added to Arthur Nichols' cleaning equipment in the Red Rock store, and it forces the mud off the walls. The mud was 4 feet deep in the store and water up to the bottom of the telephone on the wall and up to the windows in the new school house. One mattress floated away. Cans of food in a mess and labels washed off.

6/26/47. Typhoid shots were given at the Red Rock school house last week between floods.

6/26/47. Young crows were all mixed up because of the high water. You could about catch them. Saw our small bevy of quail. A young fox was seen on the highway eating a dead chicken in broad daylight and was almost caught red handed by Roy Karr.

6/26/47. Cars by the thousands came for sight seeing. It was like a plowing match or state fair. They are all welcome to come back and help put in the crops and bring along their own dinners.

7/17/47. The three redbirds are having a hard time to survive. One day two were picked up off the ground and returned to the nest. There are two female sparrows who fight over who is going to build in the nest. The mother redbird will not fight, but she keeps guard. The male redbird carries out all the leaves the sparrows put in. The redbirds' nest is very frail. We take a mirror and look into her nest.

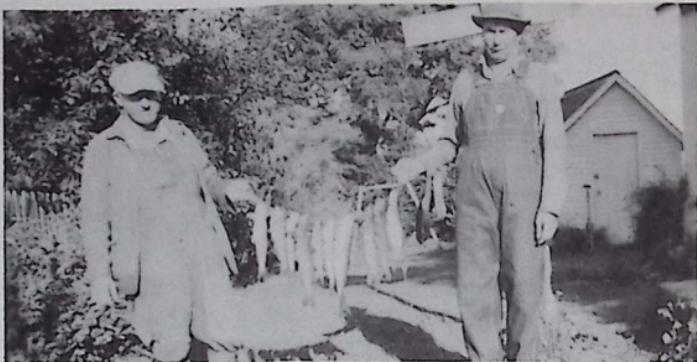
7/24/47. Price Cemetery is to be chained off and a new fence built. Cattle and hogs have been in it, and the condition is terrible. A complaint was made when someone came with Mr. Aalbers to have a tombstone erected. They could not get to the place. The township built a road through the field to the cemetery some years ago. They have a record of the new addition to the cemetery but no plan for the old part. My grandparents, Mary Ann and Lemul Houck, are buried there.

8/7/47. With the four-motored bombers flying over Friday morning, your heart almost stopped. We never want to see another war.

8/14/47. Zack Ruckman died at the Veterans' Hospital in Knoxville after being a patient there for more than a year and a half. He suffered a stroke last Saturday and never rallied. All of the years of his life were spent in this vicinity. He was the son of Benton Ruckman. He attended Central College and took part in the Spanish-American War, and was a member of the Red Rock school board many years.

8/21/47. Kirk Fuller and John Martin Visser have been painting car bodies. They have completed the cars belonging to Cecil and Henderson Reese, Joe Templeton, and Fred "the storekeeper."

8/21/47. Joe Templeton and Roy Karr spent their vacation fishing on the river, three days and three nights, and they really brought home nice "cats" for breakfast.



(Bill Karr)

Roy Karr (left) and Joe Templeton with catch.

*The flood had badly damaged the brand new Red Rock school. 8/28/47.* Some members of this community spent two days or more working on the Red Rock school yard and building and the contents therein. The piano had to be burned after the heavy piers were salvaged and used to repair the many book shelves. Books had to be burned. The teacher's desk fell to pieces. The floors are still not back to their best condition. Donald Alley is painting the walls below the floodwater line. Several new seats were purchased because of the many new pupils. Those who worked were Joe and Mary Templeton, Dwight and Sarah Harvey, Hugh Templeton, Bud Williams, and Roy Karr. School will begin on Monday with Mary Perkey as teacher.



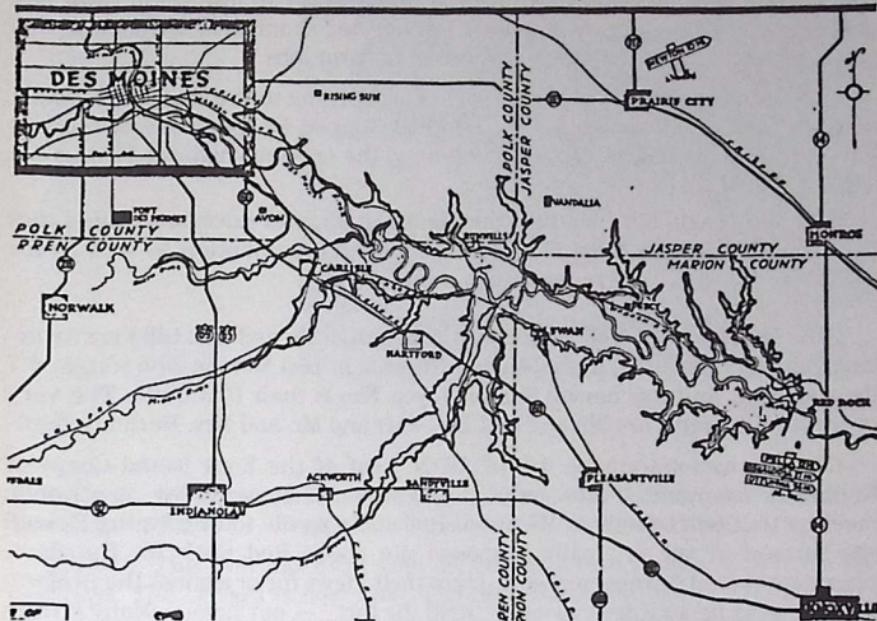
(Edgar Van Arkel)

Red Rock School, 1947 flood.

9/8/47. Harriet Visser and Myrtle Stevenson will be hostesses at a party Monday afternoon at the Visser home.

*Joy and excitement! Congress had decided to build a dam just above Red Rock, thus saving both Cordova and Red Rock from ever again being flooded. (Little did Cordovans know what would really happen).* 9/8/47. The surveyors for the Red Rock dam have been busy for days in the river bottom south of Cordova along where the spillway is proposed to be built.

### Great Flood Control Project



(Pella Chronicle, June 29, 1949)

Original plan for the dam — to be built upstream from Red Rock.

9/8/47. Some culprits have cut the telephone line several times and used the cord for fishing lines. A \$50 reward has been offered for their capture.

10/23/47. May Van Hemert has been employed in the Visser home the past week. They are busy in the shop repairing cars.

12/18/47. Boxes of homemade candy and box suppers are being sold to defray the cost of the piano for the Red Rock school.

**1948.** 1/15/48. Douglas Nichols, son of Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Nichols, was seriously injured last Sunday while coasting on the bluffs south of Red Rock with one of the Dietrich children. Douglas's sled ran into a tree and his skull was fractured on a line from the middle of the forehead down to his nose, across the eye and diagonally across the cheek. His condition was serious, but now he

has been moved into his own home, but he can have no visitors and is to lie quietly for 3 weeks. This is going to be an ordeal for an active 10-year old, and for his mother, too. Wonder what anyone could do to help him pass the time? Mail cards, puzzles, storybooks, etc. There is so much to be done for any shut-in you might know as well as for Douglas.

1/29/48. Lloyd Mathes and family moved to their home near Leighton on Thursday. Several of their neighbors helped with the big job. Clarence Bricker hauled household goods, and Tony Langstraat livestock. Rene Van Engelenhoven and Roy Karr helped. We hope they like their new location. Five years were spent down here on the farm they left. We are sorry to lose them from our neighborhood, although we might not have visited as much as we should, but we were always good friends in exchange of farm jobs.

2/5/48. The county sheriff was called one morning to the May Van Hemert home to pick up a transient there, who had stopped for food. One of his feet had been frozen, and he slept on the ground the previous night at 10 degrees below zero.

2/19/48. "Little Bill" Mathes, the Moorman Mineral salesman, called and do you know he sells mineral tablets for human consumption as well as for livestock. He says, "We're much like a hog anyway."

*First grandchild:* 4/1/48. A daughter was born to Mr. and Mrs. Bill Karr Saturday, February 28, 1948, in the Wilden Hospital in Des Moines. She weighed 7 lbs. and 7 oz. and was named Sharon Joyce. She is their first child. The very proud grandparents are Mr. and Mrs. Roy Karr and Mr. and Mrs. Berlin Ballard.

*Chilling announcement.* 4/1/48. W. N. Leaf of the Rock Island Corps of Engineers has notified citizens of the Des Moines River Valley of a public meeting that will be held in Memorial Hall at Knoxville to discuss the Howell site instead of the originally proposed site above Red Rock for the dam. Everyone should be represented to state their views for or against the project. So its now or never if we can even "hold the fort" — our homes. Many a farm family has spent their entire life savings building homes for their old age and are happy in their surroundings where they have good memories and where the pioneer forefathers came to settle years ago.

*Acrimonious hearings.* 4/15/48. Well, we were present at the dam meeting, Thursday. We still want to hold our farms, and we love our neighbors. There may never be any serious floods for 50 years. Merle Price and Bob Kaldenberg had "the floor" to say a few words in protest. Lawyer Joe Johnson presented our petitions. I'd like to know the number of farm homes the "dam lake" would cover. T'lam said his forefathers knew when they settled on the river bottom and the river came out, they'd have to move their home to the hills out of high water. Let other people do likewise. Col. Leaf said the Government wouldn't pay extra because our grandmother was born there, and that our lives should be happy in memories and in a modern future that makes us a free America.

*Beginning of a wolf hunt which was to last many weeks.* 5/13/48. At the wolf hunt held on Tuesday at the big timber north of Joe Vanden Berg's, 30

or 40 men took part. The hounds scared up the wolf almost immediately, but he got away. The gang needed a leader to organize them, and it would have been more successful. Con De Moss' two hounds were lost and could not be found. The wolf had taken 3 lambs belonging to Clarence Bricker on Monday night, and the wolf tracks were seen in the mud.

Timber Wolf



(U.S. Army Corps of Engineers)

5/13/48. The last petition protesting the Howell dam were taken to Washington D. C. by lawyer Joe Johnson on Saturday morning.

5/20/48. The wolf has been seen by four different people within the last few days. The reward is now \$100. The next rainy day, another hunt will be staged, and the entire timber will be surrounded. The den is thought to be there.

6/3/48. Highway 14 was detoured through Cordova one day last week and traffic was terrific, an average of one vehicle per minute. The reason for the detour was the installation of a new cable at the signal lights on the crossing.

6/17/48. Remember your cards to sick folks. It may be more important than polishing your stove.

8/5/48. Almost one hundred attended the Karr picnic in Knoxville Sunday. As at all picnics, food was piled high, but none wasted. Of course, there's always group pictures to take, and the men and "big and little" boys played ball and horseshoe, with the other children enjoying the playground equipment. The weather was ideal, and no one was seriously injured. The funniest stunt was when Rodney De Moss came slowly walking up to a group after he had fallen in a puddle of mud and water and had the most bashful-silly expression on his face between the mud smears. We all just roared! We are anxious to see the results of the pictures. Charles Kiser was hurt early in the morning when

he fell down a swing but not seriously. All in all, everyone surely had a good time, if not it was their own fault. Many new friends were made and old friendships renewed.

*Time for a little lecture.* 8/26/48. A large crowd charivaried the newlyweds, Marjorie Vanden Berg and Paul Vos, the evening of the wedding at about 10 p.m. Some of the boys lingered later and were quite rude about their acts and pulled off some dangerous stunts. One was injured. Let's play more fairly and go for clean, safe, and sane sports and entertainment so we'll all be good neighbors and friends.

9/30/48. Three men working for the Walnut Log Company of Des Moines were here Monday morning to see about loading a carload of logs. Guess we might as well sell our walnut timber if the dam will flood the area.

9/30/48. The dam surveyors saw 6 young wolves at the timber at Carpenter's pond.

10/21/48. On last Saturday evening, a big striped skunk walked up to May Van Hemert's well and got a drink of water from a pan and sedately walked away while May and Griffith Mikesell looked on, but never made a move or noise to frighten the "smelly" thing. The creeks have been dry so long that we wonder what all the animals do for water. Coons come very close here to the chicken waterers.

12/2/48. Today, Nov. 29, we have another chance to attend the Des Moines meeting and carry our objections to the construction of the dam, our last stand, I suppose to fight for our homes. The dam project is a foolish and expensive deal anyway—the way I see it. Maybe the committee appointed by Gov. Blue to investigate the building of the dam can stop it yet.

12/9/48. The committee appointed by Gov. Blue to investigate the construction of the dam at Howell will accept your letters on your attitude and how the dam might affect you. Write, everyone write. It's a fact that Congress never has allotted any money for the Howell project. The bill allowed for the construction of a dam at Red Rock.

*The cornpicker, a terrible farm hazard.* 12/9/48. Dale Core lost all four fingers on his right hand in a cornpicker accident this week. His son had gone to the house from the field with a load of corn to shovel by hand. It is not known how long Dale stood there unable to get loose or shut off the engine, but about one hour. It was a terrible ordeal and a lesson to everyone. Shut off the machine before any single thing is done toward it.

12/23/48. Dale Core is doing as well as can be expected. He is in the Collins Memorial Hospital. They grafted his hand to his chest to grow skin on the palm and back of his hand.

**1949.** 1/20/49. A community wolf and fox hunt was carried on Saturday. One wolf and one fox were killed and a second wolf crippled, but it was able to escape.

1/6/49. A good neighbor deed was carried out by Ira De Heer and two Israel girls when they dusted and cleaned all the house of Alberta Buttrey's before Christmas when Alberta was ill. The girls had come to the Buttrey home to practice for the church program with Jimmy, and they got busy at the cleaning job.

2/17/49. I'm getting braggerty! A new friend from Pella writes me a note and sends a page from the Iowa Publishers Trade Magazine for February, 1949, containing a story about me and my column. I do appreciate it and the story is true, even to the point that some of you make fun of it. I'm proud and humble both. (*see p. 6, Introduction*)

3/3/49. A trucker knew where a wolf crossed a fence and the highway often, so he drove near in his truck and stopped. Sure enough, here he came, and his shot got the wolf. The trucker was displaying it at a sale last week. *But was it the wolf?*

*Community aid for an unfortunate.* 3/3/49. The home of Bill Alley was destroyed by fire on Wednesday, February 23, at noon. He was cooking on an oil stove when he spilled some grease. He attempted to put out the fire himself and never called for help. If Mabel Cooper had not seen the smoke, he might have lost his life. The Monroe Fire Department arrived on the scene, but the house was too far gone. His meager belongings were saved. The county sheriff took Bill to town where his wounds were dressed. His famous long braided hair was cut. He was given a bath, new clothes, and taken to the County Home to reside temporarily.

3/3/49. Sam Nichols came face to face with "the big bad wolf" as he walked the track near the Griffith Mikesell timber one day this week.

*How dates are established: The County was seeking information concerning the date the Red Rock bridge was built. The County Engineer's office had no record. Mrs. Karr's evidence was accepted.* 3/10/49. We understand the bridge was built in 1897, the same year May Roff and O. De Heer were married, and we also know that in Feb. 1897, my father crossed on the ice with a team to go to the Houck home to marry my mother. The work on the bridge was started that summer. Joe Templeton stated that it had not been built in 1896, the year of the McKinley-Bryan presidential campaign. To attend a big Bryan rally at Pleasantville, folks south of the river crossed the Des Moines River by ferry at Red Rock. The next year, the bridge was up and in use. Dutch Hart, remembers very definitely that the bridge was opened in 1897. Joe Templeton recalled that two Red Rock bridges were built. The first was near completion when high waters tumbled it down before it was in use. It had to be rebuilt the next year.

3/24/49. A collection was taken up in Red Rock and by other friends of Bill Alley, and the money was used to buy a trailer from John Vander Werff in Pella. The trailer is to be delivered to Red Rock on the Alley property, and Bill will move back to his old habitat to live. All of his life has been spent in the vicinity, and we know he would not be happy any place else but on the Des Moines River. (*It is said that he made his living by fishing with nets [illegally] and selling the fish from house to house.*)

4/7/49. Bill Alley returned to Red Rock Saturday to live in his new home, the trailer prepared for him by his friends. He was very happy about it all.

*A bit of area history.* 5/12/49. John Wilson of Des Moines, son of Gus Wilson, was here selling apples. He was all excited over this neighborhood because his father operated a sawmill in the river bottom sawing walnut logs; helped build the Wabash; and crossed the ferry at Rousseau.

5/19/49. Bill Alley is not so well at his trailer home. His legs and feet are so swollen he can hardly get around.

*Relating to the very earliest Red Rock history.* 6/30/49. A descendant of J. D. Bedell, the first settler of Red Rock was here last week looking up his family history. He was in the store, called on Griffith Mikesell, and at the Joe Templeton home. The Templeton farm is the original Bedell homestead where the saw mill was located. Mary had a pitcher purchased at one time from the Bedell store (*now a proud possession of Mrs. Dorothy Templeton—note inside says “Staffordshire pitcher—1855”*). This grandson took a picture of the heirloom and enjoyed visiting with the Templetons about our early pioneer history. He was a dinner guest in their home. His son accompanied him, and their home is in Chicago.

5/19/49. At Red Rock Church a week ago Sunday night, Bert Karr and his three sons, Harold, Lloyd, and Norman, sang two numbers that pleased the audience.

*Red-letter day for the Roy Karr's.* 7/14/49. Friday we were proud to hear our name among the 47 families in Iowa who have paid for their farm last year after having an FHA loan.

10/13/49. A flock of ducks sat placidly on a sandbar today and never flew away when a boat passed. They know hunting season does not open until a later date.

11/27/49. The pheasant hunters from here did "bring home the bacon," three pheasants on Friday and one on Sunday. Sunday the men were in a rain storm, and they're a grouchy set this morning.

11/24/49. Bill Alley has returned to the County Home to be cared for.

12/8/49. Bud Williams' team got out of control on the J. M. Visser farm Saturday where Bud was picking up corn and ran away. They found one down in a pile of lumber in front of the Cecil Reese home where Henderson caught them. May Van Hemert was brave enough to unhitch the tugs while Henderson held onto the reins of one lunging horse, the other being down on his back.

12/8/49. The Latter Day Saints followers have been holding prayer meetings in the homes in Red Rock, and now they are meeting at the school house for a week's meetings. Rev. McDonald is the minister.

12/8/49. John Martin Visser invented a sled or car affair to be used in picking up corn. It is pulled by a tractor, two ride on seats, and the job is made very easy and simple.

## VI

## CORDOVA IN THE 1950s The Best of Times; the Worst of Times

*New technology changed the lives of Cordovans in the '50s. The miracle of TV brought the world into their living rooms. Electricity and running water in the homes lightened the housewife's load. The automatic washing machine was a godsend. Tractors replaced horses, and corn pickers and other machinery lessened the need for manpower. Many of the young people had to seek work in the nearby towns.*

*Trucks now carried loads once relegated to the railroad, and many trains were discontinued. Rural schools were closing, the victim of smaller population and school consolidation. Sense of community was weakened with the export of Cordova workers, the closing of the school, and the end of the railroad.*

*On the brighter side, Cordovans enjoyed a little more spending money than before. Going away on vacations became the popular thing to do. They didn't need to depend entirely on their own community for entertainment. However, they continued to give strong support to neighbors in need of help.*

*Grace Karr expresses herself on women's issues, and especially on peace and environmental issues. The battle over the building of the Red Rock dam was the ominous issue fought and lost by Cordovans during this decade.*

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**1950.** *Goodby to kerosene lamps.* 1/5/50. Pella REA group has surveyed and set the stakes for hi-line poles down through Roy Karr's fields. Hooray! I'll have electricity some day, and Santa knew it because he brought us three fine electrical appliances.

1/19/50. Harold and Lloyd Karr hunted for the wolf for three days. He was seen by one of them. Remember, there's still a reward for the "wild beast."

*Women's work.* 2/2/50. Mary Templeton brought home her baby chicks last week.

2/2/50. John Martin Visser entered Central College this semester to begin preparatory studies for a medical course.

2/9/50. Aid will meet with Sarah Jane Harvey next time. Carpet rags will be needed. They are making plans to make money to meet expenses of the church. They will quilt or serve at sales or any work anyone wants them to do.

3/9/50. Templeton and Harvey have been busy caring for the early baby pigs. Seventeen sows have 96 pigs. Joe spends all night caring for the little "porkers," and the other boys care for them during the day.

3/9/50. Seven carloads of John Deere tractors went down on the Wabash one day. We'd like to keep an account of all the new machinery that is shipped past here, but time is scarce.

3/9/50. Our hearts are heavy and everyone saddened by the mishap that befell "Old Shorty" this week. We bade him farewell as he had to be shot after having his front leg broken, presumably being kicked by one of the other horses. He was 23 or 24 years old.

3/23/50. Bill Alley who lives at the County Home is not able to wear his shoes because his feet are so badly swollen. (*He died New Year's Day, 1953*).

*The town is not what it used to be.* 4/13/50. Cordova is a very small town, not incorporated, located on the Wabash railroad that operates between Des Moines and St. Louis. It consists of a one-room depot, two-way switch track, a coal loading dock, and 5 homes. The population is 15.

*No more steam engines.* 5/4/50. Scoop! The Wabash trains will be pulled by Diesel engines with their initial runs being made on May 9. So watch out, or one will be slipping up on you like a cat at the crossings.

6/8/50. John Martin Visser passed his final tests at Central College in Pella.

6/15/50. Death came to one of our of our nine robins that can fly some. Sunday morning the two wrens, two robins, and two Baltimore orioles were fighting some varmint. The plaintive cry of young robins for help was the cause. There on the limb a big black snake had his snaky black body wrapped round its neck, and it was fluttering for life. Before Roy could get to the scene with the gun, the snake had started to swallow the robin's head. Three shots closed the snake's life in death, and the tiny robin fell to the ground dead, too.

6/22/50. John Martin Visser is continuing his studies at Central College's summer school. Harriet has been plowing the corn while he's at school.

6/29/50. The Red Rock trading post has purchased a television set, and we all gather there to see the world brought to our feet.

7/8/50. With the trouble in Korea, we can settle ourselves for another siege, but we hope the bloodshed will not be great.

*Protect the environment!* 7/20/50. Wild raspberries are at their best, and some have picked 5 gallons in one day. Joe Templeton and some others picked enough blackberries to can 100 quarts. Our wild fruit, like game, will be extinct. The road sprayers killed the raspberries on the road by Hodges. The wild roses

along the roads are disappearing, too. Last year the hollyhocks along the right-of-way which May Van Hemert takes great pains in keeping beautiful were killed. Whoever issues the sprayers' orders, warn them. The sprayers do not know how the wind drifts.

7/20/50. The mother wren who incubated the baby wren eggs on the ledge of Bill's back porch, lost her life by accident. The door blew shut and killed her, but the father cared for the orphans, and now they are grown up and left the nest. Our family moved out of their tin can home and are flying around most everywhere.

7/20/50. Hugh Templeton met up with the big bad wolf west of their pond in the pasture while driving cattle. He dismounted and tried to find him again in Conservation Grove, but he had disappeared for good.

7/20/50. Maytag workers in this neighborhood returned to their jobs after a two-week vacation.

7/27/50. Since we can have no vacation, we get much enjoyment from sending coupons for free literature on parks and Canada, etc.

8/3/50. "Bean" Nichol's vacation ends tomorrow and do you know, he spent his vacation at home only going to the river to fish! Sam did the same! "*Bean*" and *Sam* were section men on the Wabash but very much a part of Cordova.

8/3/50. When your friends and neighbors share sweet corn and other garden products with you and armloads of flowers with each other, the world is a more happy place.

*U.S. now involved in the Korean War:* 8/10/50. At 11 p.m. here on Sunday night goes a Wabash passenger train to Des Moines with 11 coaches carrying troops from Ft. Leonard Wood. Your heart weeps because of the battlefield and these men were not just training to preserve peace, it seems, but for service. There must be world peace and not war again.

8/17/50. We went to the river Sunday for a fishing trip and a picnic.

8/24/50. Joe Templeton, son of Hugh and Dorothy, found out the other night he had a shadow that followed him around, and he was frightened. So his daddy showed him how he made a shadow, too. Joe would say, "uh-huh," but he still cried and had to be held.

9/7/50. John Martin Visser and Leland Stevenson are tearing down the old Red Rock bridge. They are using dynamite.

9/14/50. John Martin Visser was struck on the shin by a part of the old Red Rock bridge when it rebounded on the rollers it sets on after he had cut through a piece of steel with a blow torch. Nineteen stitches were taken.

10/12/50. Sunday there was a great flock of blue birds and gold finches. This morning there are more migratory blue birds in my yard. Saturday night as I sat here at 10:00 p.m., a flock of geese went "honking" by. Another beautiful natural sight was the northern lights sending vertical rainbows into the sky. Take time to enjoy the trees. Soon their beauty will be under our feet.

*Complimentary or derisive?* 11/2/50. Mr. Carpenter of Galesburg says he must read *Cordova News* to see what the birds and snakes did this week.

11/16/50. Blanche Templeton and daughter Susan and Delight Wing helped Joy Shilling paper her big dining room this week.

*At 34 years of age.* 12/7/50. John Martin Visser had a heart attack and was put on a diet to lose 70 pounds.

**1951. Nation-wide apprehension.** 1/17/51. Study your part of First Aid in case of an atomic bomb attack on Des Moines or Newton. Don't be frightened. Go about your duty as our pioneer forefathers did in emergencies.

*The Karr's second grandchild.* 4/12/51. A daughter was born to Bill and Darlene Karr on Sunday, April 8, at 3:14 p.m. at the Wilden Hospital in Des Moines. She weighed 9 lb., 4 oz., and was named Susan Jean. She has one sister, Sharon Joyce, or "Sherry" as we all say. Sherry said, "We wanted a baby brother."

5/3/51. Roy and Grace Karr visited Friday evening with Joe Templeton's to see television.

*Governor reverses his initial stand.* 5/17/51. Gov. Beardsley okayed the building of the Red Rock Dam. Just remember he lost hundreds of friends and votes as well as gaining some. Where would the water lines be if a dam had been holding back this spring flood? Our melting snow and rain here all soaked into the ground, and the creek was never half full. All the dams should be built in our contoured fields.

5/17/51. Gov. Beardsley and an army officer stopped to dine at Duncan's Cafe in Monroe on Wednesday evening, but no one approached him on the dam subject.

5/17/51. The woodland called me Friday. I could see the crab apple trees were in blossom, so I took off to the woods for two hours in search of mushrooms. Could find many a one and enjoyed memories of before now. Found a sparrow's nest but didn't get to identify it. Had two eggs and I'm sure one was a cowbird's, but I left it because I had no bird book to identify it. Saw two crested fly catchers, my first ones. The book says they line their nests with a snake skin!.

7/12/51. Donald Ford reached Inchon, Korea, Dec. 22. They rode across a shallow harbor on "lighters" about 30 miles from their ship. He saw a native guiding a plow in a rice paddy with his wife being the chief source of power.

7/26/51. We don't need to go west to the mountains for vacation, especially when you can't afford to. Look around you at home!

8/30/51. Early last week, Amazing Shows of America passed through on the Wabash on their way to the State Fair. Weren't awake enough to count the cars but guess there were 100.

*For years Grace had given enthusiastic coverage to other people's vacations.* 9/13/51. We are going on vacation! In the morning at 7 a.m., we are to leave

in company, Roy and I, with Marion and Marie Rinehart from the Red Rock store for a few days at Spirit Lake, where we will stay at George and Sophie Stiers Camp located on the east side of the lake. Our telephone number will be 168J. It's been great fun packing and getting ready for the past three days. I made four pages of notes and checked and double checked until I know them by heart. When such a trip is planned, I have to prepare for all the days we are gone. It's our first vacation in 27 years. I mixed and baked a dishpan full of dog biscuits and stored other dry food in the "frig." Here's hoping for a safe return.

*How could one teacher do it?* 9/20/51. There are 40 pupils enrolled at the Red Rock school (*in eight grades*).

11/1/51. The mail crane that stood here by the depot in Cordova has been dismantled, so another landmark of earlier days is gone. It could tell so many stories.

11/22/51. "Supreme bread is super delicious. And to top if off, it's also nutritious. So says Mrs. Roy Karr of Cordova, Iowa." This came over television from Ames Saturday much to the surprise of people here. Last summer it won one dollar, and the Cary-Hill Inc. of Des Moines wrote to me to release the jingle for television. It had been on radio before.

12/17/51. Our granddaughter is not just as good as she could be, sometimes even before Christmas, but she shows a lot of fast thinking, but her grandmother knows how to spank, too. She had better! The other afternoon she said "Don't get chesty" (Wow!) and when she doesn't want to do something, she says, "I don't have to if I don't want to." (such talent!) I'm not aiming to be bragging, but her antics are something to study and know how to argue with and shout and compete with.

12/27/51. A happy New Year to all, and may wars be ceased immediately, and deaths on the highways be very few!

**1952.** 3/13/52. W. R. Karr's condition is critical. He takes very little food and has been bedfast for two weeks.

*It was the end of an era for the Karr family when Roy's father W. R., who had lived with them for 24 years, died. He had worked in the fields with Roy, and was Grace's helper in heavy duties such as carrying water, wood, etc., and was a special pal to Billy Gene.* Obituary excerpts: 3/20/52. William Riley Karr was born near Eagleville Missouri, April 18, 1869, and died in the home of his son Roy in Cordova, Iowa, March 12, 1951. Age 82 years, 10 months, and 23 days.

He was married to Jennie Viola Talbot on October 18, 1899. She passed away February 24, 1928, and he made his home with Roy since that time. Their three children were Roy, Rosa Rickabaugh, and Clyde.

Services were in the Methodist Church in Red Rock and burial in the Karr cemetery east of Cordova.

W.R. had lived in a sod house in Kansas in his youth and like many pioneers never wanted anything modern of today like radio or tractor or power saw, etc.

However, his body had to be transported from the De Heer corner to the cemetery by tractor and trailer and on foot because of impassable roads and through fields.

4/3/52. We saw Saturday as we went to Knoxville that the old Crabapple school house had been torn down. So there goes another landmark! I attended school there one year, and my father attended in a log cabin as a boy.

5/15/52. As I sat by my window and churned, a pair of white crowned sparrows made themselves at home in my flowers. The catbird, lovely bird, thinks he should build his nest under the hay rack. But maybe when his mate arrives, she will choose the cedar tree. The oriole's new nest hangs near by. For five days, 50 or more goldfinches have stayed here in our trees. Sunday, 12 males and 3 females were feeding in our yard, by the porch and on the clothes line. I never saw so many flashes of gold, and their music filled the air.

6/19/52. Gerald Arment came up with two big "cats," one 10 lbs. and one 7 lbs! And was he happy—both on the same line! All fishermen seem to be having good catches. Skinny never reported yet.

6/19/52. Fifty-eight coal cars went down Sunday. Part were loaded with iron ore. It's watermelon time, and we've seen as many as three carloads on one train.

*Who's the guilty party?* 7/10/52. When chickens and other animals die on your property, it's a law you should bury them or call a rendering truck! Not throw them in the creek! Please!

7/10/52. Monday we visited at Joe and Myrtle's to see Douglas McArthur on T.V.

8/7/52. Bill Karr found a perfect specimen of an Indian tomahawk on the river bank Sunday afternoon while fishing. It was half buried in the river bank about 4 feet from topsoil. It weighs 3 lbs and is identical to the 1½ lb. one his dad found years ago on the Wynsteker farm, only it is in much better condition. I wonder how much Indian lore is hidden in its history.

8/28/52. Harriet Visser received a piece of her parents' 50th anniversary cake from England. It was in a tin box. Many times before from friends, she had received an empty box because someone had eaten her cake enroute.

8/28/52. At the Templeton-Harvey farm one morning when Hugh was there, a big snake had a frog's hind leg swallowed. The frog was still able to jump, and he would yank the snake off the ground with each leap. Hugh cut the snake in two with his knife and let the frog go free.

10/16/52. The river is so low at Red Rock, you can walk 3/4 of the way across it on a sandbar. Even cockleburrs are growing there and are ripe.

10/16/52. Murray Van Hemert and family and Bill Karr and family were Friday night supper guests at our home for a fish supper to celebrate the end of the soybean harvest. Murray brought along his home movies and slides taken on their trip this summer.

11/6/52. Basil White, teacher at Red Rock school, resigned to take up a government job as a substitute railroad mail clerk. He will move to Chicago. Sarah Jane Harvey is substituting. The school board met Thursday evening at Hugh Templeton's. Mr. Edgar Van Arkel whose home is in Pella is the new teacher and will begin on November 17.



(Bill Karr)

Edgar Van Arkel

11/27/52. Gerald Arment and Clinton Rinehart have trapped two beavers, one measured 76 pounds. Its tail measures 18" x 18". The flesh of the tail is the best part of the meat.

11/17/52. A lone starling sits out here on a hi-line and goes through that mimicry of his many times each day. We love his tunes, but we wish he weren't such a vicious fellow.

**1953.** 1/8/53. James Templeton and John Martin Visser have TV sets.

1/15/53. A television set was installed at Bill's home, and are we enjoying it! Twenty-seven years ago when we lived in their home, little did we dream of such a thing as TV. Why even a radio was a luxury then.

1/29/53. The pupils and teachers of the Red Rock school appreciated the opportunity to be able to see the presidential inauguration on TV. We also want to thank those who let us come to their homes and to the store.

2/5/53. On, my goodness, I've just got to tell this! Greetings to some town in Indiana. I was so excited I didn't ask the minor details, but out there they read the *Cordova News* and have a stack of our notes to fill in their home town newspaper, little places where columns don't come out even, whatever you call it.

*Again, Grace's passion for numbers.* 2/5/53. Between here and Monroe this morning, we counted seven TV sets. There are 18 TV sets between here and Knoxville, we counted yesterday. Through town we counted 81, and from city limits to Croziers we counted 181. When will I get mine?

1/19/53. Wild ducks have been seen flying along the river. So last week, spring was coming. The red birds have started their early spring courtship of "Come here, So dear" etc. but today there is snow and ice and slush and clouds.

2/19/53. A week ago today Merle and Cecil Price accompanied Harriet and John Martin Visser to Des Moines. Harriet has begun the process of taking out naturalization papers. Their daughters Margaret Ann and Jean will celebrate birthdays this month.

*Looking ahead to women's lib?* 2/26/53. A typical example of farmers' wives viewpoints was expressed by a lady to my right at the REA lunch. She was happy to get the privilege of dining out because it was a treat, and she had no dishes to wash! She remarked that her hubby was gone a lot to sales and other places and he ate away often. My husband along with all the rest does likewise. So thank you, REA for the cherry pie, coffee, and hamburger and ham sandwiches.

3/26/53. Merle Price had a picture of his welding table and chair in the *Stabilizer* magazine printed in Cincinnati along with a story of how he constructed it and how it operated. He was paid for the idea.

*Embarrassing.* 4/2/53. Dorothy De Moss lost control of her car Saturday p.m. as she came from Otley, and it slid into the ditch and landed on its top. Dorothy was able to crawl through a window, but she doesn't know how she did it. First, she shut off the engine and then because she heard an unusual noise, she yanked off the wires leading to the switch. She had to take off her coat to get through the window. She is a very large lady—more than 300 lbs. and has been ill for some time.

Andrew Boat came along in his truck behind her, and he tried to help her out of the ditch, but he couldn't lift her, so Dorothy decided she'd crawl up. She dug in with her hands, and Mr. Boat boosted her along. It was really funny but not funny either. After a lot of difficulty, Dorothy finally got on her feet and into the truck to be taken home. Osh helped Lyman and Louis get the car out.

5/7/53. Sherry came all alone at dusk to deliver Grandpa Roy and Grandma Grace our May basket. It was made from a white paper doily on a jar lid and yellow ribbons and filled with popcorn and small candies. Of course, her mother did most of the construction work but Sherry helped, too.

5/14/53. Linda Arment and Sherry Karr visited Red Rock school last Tuesday afternoon. Two little five-year olds getting an inkling of school for fall of 1953. There will be seven or eight beginners.

6/11/53. Harriet Visser received word that her father had died in England on Decoration Day. Her grief is hard to bear because she is so far from home. We send you our heartfelt sympathy, Harriet.

6/11/53. I spent a couple of hours with Cecil Thursday. We walked up to the Red Rock quarry, had not been there for years, 25 or more. Trees really grow there. Found such big ones. Found jack-in-the pulpits, a buckeye tree, grape vines so big you could not reach around them, and poison ivy! We had lots of fun there as young folks. Those times are gone forever. Found coon tracks, of big and little coons.

6/11/53. Margaret and Jean Visser take piano lessons from Cecil. One day Margaret got a big splinter in her hand sliding down the cave door. Then next trip Jean slid down and got one in her bottom. It was so big and deep, they had to take her to the doctor, and he froze it to remove it and gave her tetanus shots. An expensive trip.

7/2/53. Coe Brothers started to cut the timber on the Bill Graham farm along the creek. You'd hear the buzz of the chain saw, then "timber," and then a resounding crash. Years of growth was stilled in a matter of minutes.

7/2/53. A general ring by Winona Breen says we will have no night telephone operator until someone else is hired.

7/2/53. Fourteen rail cars with new corn pickers.

8/6/53. Mr. Schultz is employed on the Wabash gang. Today the men make \$1.48 per hour. Thirty-seven years ago when Roy started working at the age of 16 years, they made 19 cents an hour.

*And the end of another war.* 8/6/53. With many prayers for years, the Korean War has come to an end, but what a shame so many may have died in vain.

9/3/53. Harriet Visser will take her oath of allegiance before a federal judge in Des Moines in October. Dorothy Reed and Cecil Price accompanied her a week ago Wednesday to act as character witnesses.

10/1/53. We are very much indebted to all the good neighbors from far and near who rushed here Wednesday afternoon to help fight the timber fire in our pasture. Many came to the answer of our calls and the general ring. It supposedly was set off by a cigarette "flipped" off the east bound train as fire started as soon as the train passed and was discovered immediately by Roy, but a strong wind and the dry grasses and brushlands acted as tinder, and it spread like "wild fire" and burned off 10 acres or more before it was under control. Templetons and Harvey brought their little road grader and Bill plowed 3 furrows, with the "wet sack and shovel brigade" following up. Everyone did something, and we appreciated every help no matter how small. So thank you, everyone, children, too. We are glad it never reached our homes, and it looked like it would. There were many weary folks, and it was patrolled until 11 p.m. with friends still helping, some with the chores. Thanks again.

10/8/53. Jane Ann Templeton was 9 years old last week, so every pupil at the Red Rock school received a "Forever Yours" candy bar.

10/8/53. Dorothy Templeton said she was taking her vacation in front of her TV watching the World Series.

11/5/53. Mrs. John Martin Visser took her oath of allegiance to the United States on Tuesday, October 27, in Des Moines. She is very proud of the little flag presented to her, and it is symbolic of our nation and what it stands for. Harriet was born in Beeford, England, East Yorkshire County. She was married to John Martin Visser at Leicester, England, on Feb. 4, 1945.

11/19/53. Of course, we were present at the Red Rock school program Thursday evening along with all the grandparents and parents. Our heart is always at school. More than \$19 was earned from the sale of the lunch donated by the mothers. Each school child got his plate lunch free. A good crowd attended.

12/3/53. More than 12 years ago, Mrs. Wynsteker wrote the Cordova News in Dutch for the *Pella Weekblad*.

12/10/53. If my notes are late, it's because I am too busy. Just finished carrying black pullets from the brooder house, and am I weary!

**1954.** *A business boost for Cordova.* 3/11/54. Vander Zyls (from Pella) have moved an office building into Cordova. Two big fertilizer tanks are here and motor and pump are ready. Three more tank cars arrived at our station. A truck load of 1,000 gallon size tanks came direct from Louisiana. They will be mounted on wheels and used to take fertilizers direct to the fields.

*Hurrah!* 3/25/54. Walter Cronkhite came Saturday evening and brought our TV. We are very glad to see all the good things, but how will I ever get the dishes done?

5/6/54. It's mushroom time! Some folks found 3 gallons and one man found a bushel. And these mushroom farms are all a secret.

5/20/54. Thursday, two special passenger trains, one with nine cars and one with eleven went through to Des Moines. They were New York Central trains. They carried sleeper, dining, and observation cars. Roy read in the paper that it was the Metropolitan Opera Company going to KRNT Theatre after playing in St. Louis the night before.

*An innovative all-community project.* 5/27/54. The Red Rock school board met at a called meeting. It was decided to make the schoolground a playground and picnic area for the summer months instead of renting it for pasture. Some citizens were to mow and rake the site on Thursday morning. A donation of any amount is accepted to beautify the place or to use for repairing of damage if some results. Any parent whose child breaks out a window is responsible for the cost. They plan to build a picnic table with some of the money. A sign is to be posted. Everyone is to keep grounds clear of trash, etc. Mr. Van Arkel planted a rose and some other shrubs before school closed.

5/27/54. The school picnic was held Wednesday noon with a big crowd present. Because of so many funerals, the group had to leave early, and the farmers went back to the fields.

*Instructions from The Chronicle:* 6/3/54. We have our Country Correspondents' Manual and have hurriedly read some, and some has been read to me. It will be hard to change our bad habits — poor construction of sentences

plus grammatical errors, especially where a misplaced phrase hangs on the end of my sentences.

6/10/54. Celia Harvey, daughter of Dwight and Sarah, was elected President of the Marion County 4-H Clubs at Rally Day in Knoxville.

*There must have been a lot of snakes. Mrs. Karr speaks of them many times in her columns.* 7/1/54. My heart skipped more than one beat Thursday here at home when a big black snake, five feet long, was all wrapped around a post and his head in a tin can after the baby birds. After yelling hysterically for Bill, he did get here and shot the snake several times and chopped off his head. The dogs are still scared of the hoe and the place where he was killed right here by my rose bush. It was the longest snake I ever saw.

7/8/54. Uncovered a great black snake at the well last night under some tin. Did he run, but not I. All I could do was scream and be frozen in my tracks!

*Red Rock decline.* 9/2/54. Rineharts at the Red Rock store report it will be closed on September 4, Saturday, and not open for business thereafter. If they do not sell it, they will continue to live there.

12/2/54. At the Red Rock school on Monday evening, 19 adults and several children met to form a social group, which will be called the Double RCs—Red Rock and Cordova Community. They will meet once a month.

12/12/54. The Double RCs met at Red Rock School Tuesday evening. Sixty-nine were present. A potluck was served at 6:30 p.m. with all kinds of good food. Many Christmas songs were sung, then a business meeting. The gifts the pupils had made throughout the year for their parents were passed out from under the big Christmas tree. The entire school house was elaborately decorated, and we hope the flash bulb pictures are good.

12/30/54. Another sad nature story. The parakeet in the Lloyd Karr home was enjoying the freedom of their home when one of their girls bounded into the living room and crushed out his life. After they had sobbed all day, their daddy went to Monroe to the aviary operated by Ethel Bricker Bell and purchased another bird.

**1955.** 1/20/55. John Martin Visser was seriously injured when he was cranking his tractor, tearing the muscle around his heart. He was taken to the V. A. hospital in Des Moines in an ambulance.

2/27/55. John Martin Visser is still bedfast with both his legs bandaged tightly.

2/1/55. Harriet Visser visited her husband John Martin Visser at the Des Moines V. A. Hospital. He is still bedfast.

2/24/55. J. M. Visser returned home last week after spending several weeks in the V. A. Hospital in Des Moines.

5/19/55. Harriet Visser entered a Des Moines hospital last week Wednesday. Monday she underwent surgery on her nose.

5/26/55. Harriet Visser's operation was performed Wednesday. She arrived home Thursday evening, and she was still very ill. Tony Graham stopped to see her. Two weeks ago, Tony had her tonsils removed by a Des Moines doctor.

5/26/55. A car every minute on the highway.

6/2/55. Art Nichols has a new Buick. They plan a vacation to the Black Hills and Yellowstone, and he has his colored film bought.

6/9/55. Harriet Visser was in Iowa City for a medical checkup. She will return later for x-ray treatments on her nose.

6/16/55. Harriet Visser and daughters get their mail at 909 3rd Street, Iowa City, while Harriet takes treatments for five weeks on her nose.

6/16/55. We're planning on seeing you at a picnic at the Red Rock Church yard on July 4 to commemorate the building of the first church in Red Rock 100 years ago. If the men are still working in the fields, they can plan to come to the picnic and return to the field later. They have to eat some place, just add an extra hour to their "noon time hour."

6/23/55. Harriet Visser and daughters returned from Iowa City Saturday for good. The three weeks of x-ray treatments are supposed to have arrested Harriet's troubles with her nose and throat.

7/14/55. Eighty-four people gathered at the Red Rock Church Monday, July 4, for the centennial picnic. A short program was given in the afternoon.

7/14/55. John Visser and family were at the Lloyd Karr home Monday evening to enjoy the fireworks display.



Harriet Visser and daughters  
Margaret Ann (left) and Jean.

(Dorothy Templeton)

7/28/55. Harriet Visser returned from Iowa City Tuesday and is not to return for two months.

8/4/55. We've had no rain the past week, and our temperature has been over 100 degrees three or four days. The section men laid a thermometer by the rails on the Wabash, and it blew up. Grasshopper devastation grows more critical. Some parts of the garden are stripped. They even bore holes down in cabbage heads and into the onions, but the fields that were sprayed slayed the grasshoppers.

9/15/55. Harriet Visser is not very well. She is having trouble with her nose again.

*How quickly weather conditions change.* 10/6/55. We had 4½ inches of rain last Wednesday night. The Fifield Creek and the creek by Herman De Heer were all out. The Wabash track at Fifield was out, and the trains were more than 4 hours late. The creek at Cordova was bank full. Several sheep were in the flood waters and some were drowned.

11/3/55. Coon hunters are out every night this week. Amos Jones saw a mountain cat in the timber near the "old slough" west of Red Rock.

2/15/55. Ernie Reed, wife and baby have come to Des Moines to live recently. Ernie spent several years in England in the Air Corps. He called to see Harriet Visser but didn't take time to say hello to the rest of us folks.

**1956.** 1/1/56. Saturday morning, a typical transient came to our door for potatoes, bread, and matches. He was very old with gray hair, a long gray beard, and the "real" bundle over his shoulder, and a crooked stick for a cane. It has been many years since someone came for food.

*A serious turn of events.* 1/19/56. I had a light stroke Thursday morning at my home and can't sit up or have company for one week, and maybe not then—the doctor will say. But I can read cards and letters as I lay in bed.

1/19/56. Harriet Visser's operation was performed as planned for last Friday but just to explore. Doctors did not remove any tissue but will give an x-ray treatment every day for 15 days, and after that she will be able to come home for a while and then return to the hospital. Henderson Reese, Doyle Kane, and Hugh Templeton were in Iowa City that day with her.

1/26/56. Well, here I lay flat on my back still. For some reason, the good Lord spared my life last Thursday. Tomorrow the doctor will make another report.

2/2/56. The doctor ordered me to be flat in bed for 2 more weeks. Gave me permission to sit up in bed one hour in the morning and afternoon. Company limited to twice a week. I am improving but still in grave danger. But I've got lots of spunk, and lots of friends from the flowers and letters I've gotten. Thanks again to all of you.

2/2/56. Bob Visser and Dwight Harvey drove to Iowa City Saturday to visit Harriet Visser. Her room is C-41, State University Hospital, Iowa City. Her

treatments are given in both a.m. and p.m., and she is able to walk some. Margaret and Jean, her two daughters are in Harvey this week. This is a special note to you two little girls. Write your mother a short note every day. I do.

2/9/56. Doctor checked my blood pressure at 178 and weighed 158, almost like being born again. Gave me additional foods I could eat, but no more calories than 1400. As to company, we forgot to ask, but I think it would be O.K. if I didn't talk all the while, and the calls weren't too long.

2/9/56. Harriet Visser returned from Iowa City to her own home last week. Now the last report is she will again go back to Iowa City as her condition is not good. Aunt Cora Karr is staying in the Visser home to help.

2/16/56. Sunday, February 5, was Harriet and John Martin Visser's 11th wedding anniversary. They observed it quietly at their home. Their daughter Margaret had her 10th birthday on Tuesday, and there was ice cream and cake. Aunt Lizzie made the cake. Jane, Martha, Joe, and Alice Templeton, and Sarah and Celia Harvey were there for the party.

2/23/56. Mary Katherine Templeton had her new roommate at Central College, Ruth Vogel, and four college girl friends as supper guests in her home. Miss Vogel's parents and small brother were also guests. It was their first visit to a farm, as he is a stockbroker on Wall Street. That evening they visited at the homes of Dwight Harvey and Hugh Templeton to see their "big farm" setup which brought forth many unusual exclamations. But we would be excited likewise if we were in a big city.

2/23/56. Harriet Visser is again back home. She gained a little weight and can walk. She has received no new radioactive treatment in her blood stream.

3/1/56. I suppose the four children of Hugh and Dorothy are the happiest of anyone for miles around. They have a new black and white pony colt; also a new saddle and bridle. His name is "Topper." He also has a good last name, but I can't recall it.

3/15/56. Harriet Visser is not improved. She suffers much pain at times. She can have no company now except the near relatives who take turns day and night helping her.

3/15/56. Harriet Visser's condition is reported better, and then not so good. She talked to her sister in London by phone Monday. Her sister Dora Fullerton of Hull, England, arrived in Des Moines by plane Thursday, March 8, through the courtesy of Harriet's good friends and neighbors who helped raise the money to finance the trip. John Martin Visser, Rev. and Mrs. Sloan and other friends from the Monroe Methodist Church met her at the airport last Thursday night.

4/5/56. I didn't mean by my remark two weeks ago that I was stopping my column. I just meant to say you never know when "our maker" sees fit to snuff out our lives and maybe I would not be here next week. Dr. told me I could, read, write, and watch TV while in bed. If I just had to lay there and worry, I'd be in a straight jacket.

4/5/56. Harriet Visser passed away at her home north of Red Rock, Wednesday, March 29, 1956, after a long illness. She was born March 3, 1917, in Beeford, England, and was a member of the Church of England in Leicester. She was 39 years old. She leaves to mourn her husband, John Martin Visser, her two daughters, Margaret Ann and Jean Alice, and her sister Dora Fullerton of England, who was at her bedside. There are four other sisters and a brother in England. Funeral was held Saturday, March 31, at the Methodist Church in Monroe with burial in the t'Lam Cemetery near Howell beside her mother-in-law, Aunt Alice Visser, one of Harriet's last wishes. She had an unfailing determination to get well until last Sunday, and then her wishes for the future were told to those near and dear to her. Relatives and her many friends will miss her cheerful smile and her willingness to help wherever she was able.



(Harriet Heusinkveld)

Harriet Visser grave, t'Lam Cemetery.

5/5/56. More than \$15 was collected for the Cancer fund instead of flowers for the late Harriet Visser. The Red Cross drive is being conducted now in Red Rock Township, and it will also be a memorial to Harriet we understand.

5/5/56. Mrs. Dora Fullerton left the John Martin Visser home Friday, April 27, for her home in England. 5/26/56. Mrs. Dora Fullerton wrote a note to her new friends she met in Iowa, and it is to be passed around among us. It has not reached me as yet. Her train in England was late so her welcome party missed her in her home town. But as she walked into her garden and yard to see the flowers, they all tripped into her home, and on the table was a big cake that said, "Welcome Home." 7/26/56. Dora Fullerton wrote another letter in which she repeatedly expressed gratitude to all who contributed to her trip to America. (*Mrs. Dora Fullerton returned to Iowa to visit both in 1974 and 1976.*)

6/21/56. Our big fat "happy toad" has constructed himself a house of last year's dry leaves to camouflage himself in daytime. It has a front door, and at night he sits with his head out, snapping at the flies and bugs.

*Grace never approved of large dams.* 6/28/56. We need many small dams on every farm to "keep the raindrop where it falls" (if it ever falls in excess again). The money being planned for any of the big dams could be divided among land owners, and these small dams built which would help more, and each home could stand as is, and there would be no flooding.

7/19/56. A large number of people were baptized in the river at Red Rock two weeks ago Sunday.

*Another happy day for Grace.* 7/26/56. Jake Rozendaal worked Wednesday and Thursday digging trenches for Roy and Bill Karr for their new water pipe line to carry water to Bill's house, to our house, and to the stock tank out east in the pasture, more than 1,100 feet. Some plastic pipe was laid. It was a happy time when the first water flowed through the hydrant. We have waited 26 years for this.

8/23/56. Members of the Red Rock school board met at the school house Friday night and washed windows and applied a finish to the floor. So now it's ready for school to start the last week in August. The mothers met with Mr. Van Arkel from 9 to 11 o'clock to get the new book orders and exchange books.

8/23/56. Aunt Kate has completed sewing her 80th cushion top. They are made of appliqued scraps of many designs. She also adds buttons and buttonholes. Then lately she has been cutting cotton scrap "feathers" and making the inside. She really keeps busy, is quite well, and her age is 86 years "young."

8/23/56. As we went to Runnels last Sunday, we saw one pasture that was a lake of blue color, and it was made of blue vervain blooming, and the ironweed. We were able to pick a bouquet near Price Cemetery.

9/5/56. Tuesday night Bill Karrs, Uncle Corda and Worth Karr and Roy and I were at Dwight Harveys for chicken and steak. Golly, but it was good. There was a tossed salad, pickled peppers, olive cherries to go with it. I didn't count calories for that time. My pressure is 158, I take less medicine, and am able to do more housework.

*An idyllic day.* 10/4/56. On Sunday, Roy, granddaughters Sharon and Susan, and I went to the river to fish all day and mostly for a picnic dinner. I don't see why Sue hasn't fallen in the river long before now. Her May West jacket was left home. It seems she did everything she shouldn't have done. Walked through poison ivy, but it never caught us, and now three days are past. We counted 18 planes overhead. Saw snipe wading in the water opposite us. Up river a short way was a flock of 50 wild ducks, or more, and they stayed there all day. We saw a kingfisher dive down for little fishes. We had a wonderful time and a nap, but no bonfire because it was too windy and dry.



Grace Karr and granddaughters  
Susan (left) and Sharon.

(Reda Van Zante)

9/13/56. Celia Harvey is the student assistant to the chaplain at Parsons College at Fairfield, and she was elected cheerleader. On Sunday Dwight and Sarah, her parents, went down to spend a day with her. They must be in their dorm rooms by 8 o'clock on week days.

10/11/56. There was sadness in our hearts Monday as our rat terrier dog "Topper" was hit by the afternoon freight train, carrying 24 cars of ore. His head was cut off and lay outside of the tracks, and his body lay in the middle of the track. I didn't see the accident, but I counted the cars. Trainmen did lots of extra whistling but to no avail. Topper was 9 years old and had been blind in both eyes for more than two years, but he knew how to get about. We knew he would meet his fate some day this way. His coffin was a big brown paper sack, and he was laid to rest on the east side of the right-of-way. As a pup, Bill bought him from Otto for \$5.00.

*Some of the school patrons thought the teaching at Red Rock was a little unconventional, but they agreed in later years that some very good students had came out of the school.* 10/22/56. Last week. was National Education Week. We visited Red Rock school on Friday morning. It was art class time. Boys were in the hall doing woodwork. Some were spool knitting, and the little folks were making turkeys using their hand and fingers as a pattern. It was a busy "bee hive" of activities. Two girls baked and frosted cupcakes. Jane Ann put their potatoes on racks to bake for their dinner. I'm saying it's the best equipped school house in Marion county. It's just like a home. There's reading and arithmetic lessons in the cake recipe, and they found a new word. The library books are outstanding. Flowers were growing for the science experiment.



(Dorothy Templeton)

Kids at Red Rock School (l-r): Jane Ann Templeton, Dennie Nichols, Joe Templeton, Delmar De Heer.

**12/13/56.** Arthur Adams got his right arm broken at school Monday when Donnie Martinache fell on him when playing football. Mr. Van Arkel took him to Templeton's, and his father took him to a doctor in Knoxville. He had school insurance this year, but last year he didn't have any when he broke his other arm.

**12/27/56.** Today is the last day for school at Fair Oaks, and our hearts are sad. These old one-room school houses will soon be extinct. And all we will



Fair Oaks School, 1928.  
Grace Karr both attended and taught in this rural school.

(Jennie Breen)

have will be memories. We taught our first year at Fair Oaks, teaching there more than two years at different periods. The pupils in this district will be hauled by bus to Otley, beginning the New Year. Hazel Bricker will drive the bus.

1957. 2/28/57. Sunday morning I took a walk down the track to the switch. There are 308 ties from the switch to the end of the track. The wind rustled the dry grasses by the track, and it was moaning in the treetops on the hill. It was sorta sad and lonely because it was cloudy and dark. Wednesday morning I walked again on the hills in the pasture. And there's a bluebird singing to thank you for these beautiful spring days. Judy walked with me, and really had a time romping along. Spot started out, but gave up for the barn. I stopped by to see the little lambs playing in the hay. They are the cutest little fellows. If I take a walk each day, I can lose a pound or more, but still I can't do my housework without giving out.

2/28/57. A great number of friends from here attended "Dutch" Hart's funeral in Pella. He lived nearly all his life in Cordova where he was born. He used to operate the elevator here, had a general store for years, operated a garage and repair shop and was postmaster for several years. He was born October 28, 1892 (*five years after the town was founded*).

4/4/57. The kids really had a time in the deep wet snow building snowmen and having snowball fights. Some of the dads, mothers, and granddads had just as much fun. They built igloos at Red Rock school of snow. We were glad for the moisture the snow contains, and it is all soaking in the ground. In spite of the traffic tie-up and electricity off, no bread man, no schools, etc, we're glad for it all.

5/9/57. Also I found more than 2 gallons of mushrooms this week, but golly was I weary. I stooped over 214 times, and I walked "so many miles." Bill Graham broke all mushroom records surely. They picked 21 gallons. This is really a good mushroom year. There should be more yet through the month of May since warm rains and sunshine helps bring them poppin' up.

5/16/57. Bill got some new signers on the petition for the reorganization of school at Red Rock. We four signed ours to go into the Monroe district. Red Rock School Board met Thursday night.

5/30/57. "April showers make May flowers" was the motto on the wall of the Red Rock schoolhouse the day of the picnic Friday. Kites were flying from the ceiling. A big crowd enjoyed the picnic Friday noon. Jane and Jean de Heer, Arthur Adams, and Donald and Joan Martinache finished eighth grade. Mr. Van Arkel gave them gifts of bracelets, necklaces, and cowboy ties.

6/20/57. The Templeton children sold 75 domestic rabbits that they raised in their barn loft, running loose. Now they have a project of ten baby pigs whose mother passed on to "pig heaven."

8/15/57. What do you know! Susan Jean Karr, age six years, won first prize with her chocolate chip cookies at the fair in the big open class where there were many entries. She did all the work by herself except her mother read the recipe to her. Then Sharon won second place with oatmeal cookies in open class

among a great number of entries (both Mrs. K's granddaughters). Both girls out-classed their mother. Jane Ann Templeton baked the best chocolate cake to win over all grown-ups. The county fair grows better each year with many more entries and many more people taking part.

8/29/57. About 4 a.m. Tuesday morning an extra train of about 45 cars carrying the midway shows for the State Fair went up on the Wabash. The double unit train flew two white flags denoting that it was an extra.

*CRISIS. The editor of the Chronicle suggests that Mrs. Karr cut her column in half.* 9/16/57. The amount of news I write for this column is to be "cut in 'half'." I have not made my decision whether to continue or stop. My wages are not enormous, and I put out a big effort keeping notes, and it takes about 2 hours to write 12 pages longhand, so that's writing for about nothing. My column means a lot to me above financial remuneration, but---

*The Chronicle yielded to the storm of protest that followed. Noteworthy was a letter received from 12 journalism students from Michigan State University. Mrs. Karr refers to it only briefly.* 10/24/57. The students from Michigan State University of East Lansing have signed their names to one of my finest fan letters. Thank you, fellows, I do appreciate such a fine letter and all your interest.

9/26/57. Mr. Van Arkel was injured at school at recess on Tuesday when there was a "pile up" and collision of himself and some youngsters. Hugh Templeton took him to Dr. in Pella. Sarah Harvey substituted for him at school on Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday.



On the schoolyard enjoying the fall weather. Red Rock Church in the background.  
L-r: Jane De Heer, Becky De Heer, Jane Templeton, Linda Nichols, Jane Ruth Riherd, Rose Ann Claire, Martha Templeton, Sharon Karr. Susan Karr.

12/5/57. A good time was had at the church Tuesday when we attended the school program of the Red Rock children. Only 19 pupils attended school this year. We were sad to think this might be the last school program here. A nice crowd was present. Doughnuts, coffee, and chocolate milk were served.

*Less than two weeks later, Grace's fear of losing the school was confirmed:* 12/19/57. The second election for the reorganization with Knoxville was voted on the afternoon of December 19. I think about 30 votes were cast. Five schools in the area voted "no," but the percentage of "yes" vote schools was large enough to pass.

**1958.** 4/3/58. Lloyd Karr planted potatoes Thursday. He sowed oats and clover seed the first of the week. They have all been exposed to the mumps by their daughter Carol so they are getting their spring work done very early in case they take them.

*Another example of the popularity of Cordova News even among people who did not know Cordova:* 4/10/58. A special "hello" to the four girls in Des Moines who read my column. One lives in Pella, but each week she takes "The Chronicle" back with her, and they "cabbage on" to my items. A good friend of mind happened to be eating at the same cafe they were one day, and she informed me.

4/24/58. Waardhuizens, Templetons, and Harveys have been plowing late at night and in the early morning hours. One day last week some neighbors of Lloyd Karr plowed with 3 tractors in the river bottoms for him. Lloyd is very sick with the mumps. His girls are back in school.

*Time and again Grace decries the destruction of soil and timber:* 4/24/58. Remember when the farmer used to rake and burn his stalks in the field and what a pretty sight it was at night when it seemed all your neighbors burned theirs the same evening? They don't do it that way any more. Some farmers this spring have raked soybean straw and burned it, and then will disk the field for this year's crop. The soil is so loose and porous it needs no more. Since so much land has been cleared near the river, you see big fires each day where brush is burned.

5/1/58. Saturday morning right by my path was a snake all coiled up and hissing. No one was here, so with the hoe I had to take his life. First I threw two bricks at him and missed. He was the mate of the one Roy had just killed returning for vengeance. The ordeal made me sick. Now my door is fixed.

5/8/58. Little girls were busy in Cordova, as most other children were, on Thursday evening delivering May baskets. They were of many kinds and sizes and contained popcorn, flowers, candy, and gum. Some were made of milk cartons, crepe paper, and paper doilies.

5/8/58. Spring has come, and it's mushroom time again! We had a big mushroom supper on Monday night, more than six people could eat. On Sunday following dinner, we hunted mushrooms and wild flowers and explored rocks and crevices at the base of the red rocks near Red Rock.

5/22/58. Jane Ann Riherd was hit in the base of the head with a rock by Linda Lou Nichols when they were at the gravel pit throwing rocks in the river. It required four stitches, and Jane had to miss school because of bad headaches.

*With the closing of the Red Rock school, the focal point of the community dissolved as some students took off for school in Knoxville; others went to Monroe 9/1/58.* Sherry and Sue boarded the Monroe bus Monday just as proud as could be. They carried not a book or dinner bucket. They were dressed up in new outfits and had checks in their pockets to pay for their school lunches and school books. What a difference from the way "Grandma" started. I probably had a new gingham dress. I know we bought our own books before school started, and at one time my dinner bucket was a common gallon bucket. I remember because I dashed it over a boy's head once.

*Several of the women of the community were going to other towns to work.* 9/25/58. A great big flock of blackbirds paused in our trees to rest Thursday. They can make you so happy with their chatter when you are lonesome, alone, and tired. Seems any more I'm the only one home in Cordova during the day time.

11/20/58. Fair Oaks school house (about two miles from Cordova) sold Friday afternoon to Delos Vanden Berg. I taught there more than two years. We are not against better schools and reorganization, but you have a little heartache when you see the "little red schoolhouse" pass on just like log cabins and pioneers. There's so much to recall and remember.

*Another gloomy omen—the Wabash had been the reason for the founding of Cordova.* 11/27/58. The Wabash Railroad has sent word that their depot in Cordova will be closed as of December 10. Roy has been custodian at the depot for a number of years and took care of any small freight that comes in. The service will be discontinued now. Most railroads seem to be closing down small depots to cut expenses.

**1959.** *Wonder of wonders.* 2/1/59. Listen to this! Saturday p.m., Darlene and I took three baskets of clothes to the Knoxville Laundromat! Little did I ever, ever think 30 years ago, when I was washing overalls on a washboard that I would ever do this. There were 20 Westinghouse washers and 10 large dryers. It costs 20 cents to wash through the cycle, and 10 cents to dry for 10 minutes. We had finished in less than two hours at a small cost. We combined our loads. You use only  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup of soap flakes. There's a money changer and a soap and bleach dispenser. There are tables for folding clothes, chairs and benches, and a restroom. People coming and going every way. Some brought clothes for drying only. Some took home their wet wash. We saw one lady load ten machines in a row. There's a bulletin board on which hang lost articles, belts, socks, handkerchiefs, gloves, etc. What an experience for old fashioned folks like me.

*The unique Red Rock bluffs were ever a source of mystery and outstanding beauty, dear to the local people, also a delightful picnic and exploring spot for outsiders who knew about it.* 2/19/59. Dean Sadler of the Chronicle office stopped in to say "hello" the morning he took the pictures of the Rickabaugh bluffs. At the time the Indians camped at Red Rock, they would also camp at

these bluffs. During the high floods in the 1800s, the Indians put a mark on the cliffs where the water line came to. I don't know whether anyone knows where that mark was. The bluffs were supposed to be haunted, so said the teenagers of way back when they used to come to Cordova at night to the stores and would tell stories about the bluffs. There's a story of one time some young girl fell from the bluffs and hung in her long hair.



(State Historical Library)

One of the Red Rock bluffs which has been mined for its red sandstone.

I have ridden down the old road in a Ford roadster in water when the river was out—scared to death. The bluffs were a place where you always found the first blue bells, boys' breeches, dog-toothed violets, etc. on a warm spring day. It had snakes, too. On the top of the bluffs, the boys would wade through huge patches of mushrooms and destroy them while herding cows. They would destroy them but never eat them.

3/5/59. The ice went out of the river here Monday night. Art measured the thickness of the ice cakes, and it was 15 inches. A good boat was smashed to smithereens at Red Rock. Great numbers of fish were washed up on sand bars and stranded. Some really big, big fish were found.

3/5/59. Patricia Van Engelenhoven is to get her master's degree at a college in Kansas this year. She is another of the "home farm folks" who has made a great success in life.

6/11/59. Cecil Price visited at May Van Hemert's Thursday afternoon when she found me gone. She first left a beautiful bouquet of mock orange blossoms and lemon lilies on my back porch.

7/2/59. Two orphan robins passed away some time Thursday p.m. leaving two grief-stricken little granddaughters! The girls put them in a cage and fed them fish worms and oatmeal Wednesday and Thursday. Cause of death may have been too many worms, or maybe they shouldn't have had oatmeal.

*Grace was the happiest of women when she wrote this item: 9/10/59.* Are we happy that the bill to start work on the Red Rock dam was defeated! We know there are much better ways to control water run-off than by big dams. Conserve the soil by small projects on every farm in the drainage area. We are aiming for that. *But she was so devastated one week later when Congress reversed itself that she could not find the words to tell it:* 9/17/59. The latest reports from Congress in Washington make me feel faint! I give up! About the dam!

*Tragedy strikes the Vissers again.* 9/10/59. A death is to be reported which saddened our neighborhood very much. It is the death of John Martin Visser. His body was found in bed Tuesday morning, September 1. He passed away during the night of a heart attack. He was the son of Alice Templeton and Tennis Visser. He was born April 20, 1916. His wife preceded him in death 3 years ago. He leaves to mourn his passing two daughters, Margaret Ann and Jean Alice, age 13 and 12 years. Funeral services were conducted at Evans Arlington Chapel in Knoxville, Thursday, Sept 3. Casket bearers were Martin and Bruce Visser, Henderson Reese, Hugh Templeton, and Richard Fortner. Mrs. Guy Anderson was organist and Mrs. Young sang "God Be With You" and "The Old Rugged Cross." Burial was in the t'Lam Cemetery near Howell under the auspices of the American Legion Post of Monroe.

9/10/59. John Martin Visser's sale was satisfactory to the guardians. It was a cold, chilly, cloudy day, but a fairly good crowd attended. I have attended few sales, but I find it very exciting.

10/1/59. Margaret Ann and Jean Alice Visser will live in the Dwight Harvey home for now. Dwight's condition improves every day following a major operation on his back last Friday.

10/8/59. Among the books I received at the sale of the late John Martin Visser was a copy of Shakespeare's Complete Works; a different geography printed in 1920; a large botany textbook for college study, and a Historical Gazeteer of the World, 1886 edition. There is an old notebook Aunt Alice (*John's mother*) used at Central College.

10/8/59. Celia Harvey came from Fairfield Sunday by bus and then on to Des Moines to visit her father. Dwight is much improved. Margaret and Jean Visser are now permanently established in the Harvey home. Early this week they had their eyes tested and a trip was made to the dentist. They began their school work in Knoxville Monday morning. The first years of their schooling were spent in Monroe.

10/8/59. Farewell to the night train and early morning whistle of the old Wabash passenger train! She made her last run to Moberly, Missouri, from Des Moines last Wednesday! Trucks, planes, etc. have changed times. Aunt Mary Karr used to "love" to hear the whistle of the trains after they moved south of the river. Rosa Rickabaugh hears it at Flagler! One rainy night we were in Pella, and I heard it whistle for Howell's crossing. John Kamerick says he'll miss it as it passes by his house. There will be many sad folks. So again, farewell.



(Harriet Heusinkveld)

The last of the Wabash passenger trains.

*It was final—the dam would be built not above Red Rock as first expected but downriver at Howell Station, and Cordova-Red Rock would be covered by the newly formed lake. Displacement begins. 10/8/59. John Kamerick and wife will be one of the first families the dam will displace. Government men were at their home last week choosing a site for their office. Kamericks have remodeled their home, have electric heating, etc., and they are very very dissatisfied about leaving. So am I!*

*This editor was surprised! 10/15/59. A new friend called to see me Monday. It was George R. Heusinkveld, farm editor of the Oskaloosa Herald. He has long been a reader of our column. He was in Pella at Central College on business as he is chairman of the alumni for an event coming up, so he decided to check on the Red Rock dam area. His sister is a professor at Central.*

10/29/59. Tuesday was a bigger day for me. I served 33 people that day for dinner, supper, and coffee times, not counting breakfast. I kept very calm and still didn't run out of coffee. They shelled our two cribs of sealed corn that day. Art Waardhuizen and Virgil Klein have the sheller.

11/12/59. Another thought came to my mind! Think how many mushrooms the Red Rock dam will destroy!

11/12/59. Today, November 5, is May Van Hemert's 79th birthday. She is well as usual and busy quilting.

11/19/59. Edward Schippers got his left hand in the corn picker Saturday. Part of his thumb was amputated and finger nails on the next two fingers were gone. More parts may have to be removed. He is in much pain. His neighbors are doing the chores. Dr. Tharp and Mary are caring for him.

## VII.

### THE END OF CORDOVA—the 1960s.

*The subject that dominated all others in the 1960s was the Government acquisition of Cordovan town and farmlands and the evacuation of Cordovans in order to make way for Lake Red Rock. The trauma of being displaced from their beloved farms and homes and the scattering of their community to the four winds was a blow from which some never recovered. Cordovans moved out, one family at a time, starting at the beginning of the decade and through the next several years as their lands were condemned by the Government. Grace and Roy Karr were ordered to leave in 1962, and they moved to Monroe, about seven miles north. Others moved to Knoxville, Pella, or Newton, and some moved out of the state. For several years, Grace continued to garner news of her former neighbors and to write her column from her home in Monroe.*

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**1960.** *Despite the tensions of eviction, Grace Karr continued to find enjoyment in the world around her:* 2/4/60. The red cardinal flitting about in shrubs and evergreen and over the snow covered ground adds a bit of joyous color to these cold winter days. Even on this foggy, frosty morning, every shrub and yes, even the weeds are a thing of beauty.

3/3/60. Believe it or not! I'm about to "bust my galluses." My good friend Mary told me Saturday night that Mrs. Thomas had a California paper that printed my column each week! The heading was "Back Home with the Home Folks." If I find out more, I'll report. I'm truly very proud. Maybe I'll get famous yet. They'd better send me a copy.

3/10/60. Roy and I have lived in this neighborhood for 35 years, 30 years in this house. Yes, I have lived in this house for 33 years. We are the only ones left here since we came. All farms have changed hands, some many times. The neighborhood west of us has many pioneers left: Griffith Mikesell, Bud Williams, Maud Riherd, Cecil Reese, and John Templeton.



(Bill Karr)

Karr's home, 1927-62, just north of the railroad tracks in Cordova.

I saw Cordova fall in that period from the elevator, stock yards, grain office, and garage and machine warehouse, bank, two stores, big depot, post office, mail carrier routes out of here, six homes, etc. Cordova's future is now dim, because all will be under the Red Rock water in the future.

4/4/60. Some more signs of spring—a wash flapping on the line, meadow larks singing each morning, rocks being trucked by truck loads to fill the mudholes, and the maintainer has been smoothing out the ruts.

*Following another bad flood in April, 1960, Red Rock people again had to vacate their homes, and farm work was behind schedule: 4/21/60.* Many of the neighbors have been sowing oats the past week. Among them, Herb Vander Zyl's farm near Red Rock and Garrett's farm on the Crookham bottom. Many of the farmers' wives have been in the fields, too, and some boys are out of school on certain days.

4/28/60. Have taken one short walk to the woods. Found only one tiny blooming flower there, but there were acres of other plants coming fast. My blue bells and few other early spring flowers are out there. All nature outside is growing like mad. Pears, plums, and cherries are in bloom but no peach blossoms.

*Household crisis!* 5/31/60. Had visitors on Thursday. And what a crash of my two beautiful hand painted china plates did Roy make when he caused the TV tray to collapse! It broke the plates but not the cups. Hard for me to keep back tears. The plates were gifts from the late Tabitha Spaur where I lived for three years before I was married when teaching.

6/2/60. Mr. and Mrs. C. A. DeBruin of Pella, missionaries to India, stopped to see me Sunday afternoon. I was very happy to meet them. They read my *Cordova News* in India as do other co-workers and friends who are there. The DeBruins left on Monday morning for another period of work in India.

8/18/60. We were able to attend the 4-H Club night at the County Fair Tuesday (our first time). We are really proud of all 4-H boys and girls. The square dancers were really cute. The pig scramble was really rough. We know those boys' shirts and overalls will have to be washed in Tide! Met a few old friends. Farm Bureau "eats" stands sold out all their pie and hot dogs before 10 p.m.

8/18/60. Griffith Mikesell passed away quietly at his home in Red Rock Saturday night, August 6, after being ill several months. He was born in Red Rock in 1873, one of the first members of the Red Rock Church. Griffith was an old pioneer of our neighborhood. Another contrast to a small rural community and a city is this: Friends in the neighborhood went early Monday morning and dug Griffith's grave (Merl, Hugh, Roy, Dwight, Donnie, and others). In the city there are professional grave diggers. Then there is the time at the cemetery when the friends linger to visit with the bereaved family and friends instead of rushing right off. We well remember one aged lady of years ago who requested every one stay at the cemetery to meet their friends. Cemeteries are a beautiful place, but some folks fear to tread there.

10/20/60. Friday night, Bill and his family, Roy and I, and Aunt Lida were supper guests in the spacious farm home of Hugh and Dorothy Templeton. First we watched the Nixon-Kennedy debate on TV and then a scrumptious supper was served. The table was very pretty with flowers, silver, and china, and of course the food was "tops." Dorothy's an experienced cook. There was Swiss steak, apple salad, jam, squash, etc. To finish, the dessert was a new one — frozen with ice cream as the base.

**1961.** *The beginning of the Karr's last full year in Cordova.* 1/12/61. Christmas morning and a real live four-foot tall pony with a wreath around its neck was under the Christmas tree in the Jack Campbell home—a Christmas gift from Grandma and Grandpa De Moss. Another Christmas pony arrived at the Tony Langstraat home on Friday. There are happy children everywhere we hope.

1/26/61. A scenic card from Japan, my first one! Am very glad, and it's from a new friend. It's Gerald Van Genderen, who is stationed with the Red Cross there. He was a student at Central College and reads my columns. He knew about my broken arm.

2/2/61. I watched the presidential inauguration (JFK) all day Friday, January 20. We are seeing history being made.

*The first step towards eviction.* 2/16/61. Last Friday when we were at Dr. Bosveld's office in Monroe, the field men of the Government were here to measure our buildings and take pictures. They were at Jack Jennings and Hugh Templeton the same day. Our map is in the hands of Raymond Mick of Knoxville, and he is checking the deed and abstract.

*The dreaded news!* 2/23/61. Tuesday was a big, big day for us! It's all over but the crying. Paul Hines from the Government office in Knoxville came to appraise our home, our land, and our buildings, but not our sentimental memories. There were many questions and maps and plans and more questions. We can farm the place this year and continue to live here until March 1, 1962.

3/30/61. Some time ago, Louis De Moss had a hound that was running a wolf. The chase was started here in the timber near home, chased to Howell, and the dog and its baying was lost. A call was put on the radio for the dog the next day. Some man telephoned from Adelphi, that he had shot a wolf that morning and a hound was with it. He left the wolf lay, and the dog stayed, too. Louis drove to Adelphi, and it was his dog, very tired and exhausted after that run of many, many miles.

4/13/61. Today, April 6, I am 62 years old. I suppose it will be my last birthday on the farm. I have been very happy and busy all day. The sun came out for awhile, but you yourself and your friends have to make your own sunshine. Cecil spent some time with me. She brought a new kind of homemade cookie. Friends came with a big angel food cake and ice cream for coffee time. There was a beautiful hooked rug for my new home that is a "keepsake of memories." Our dear Bill, Darlene, Sherry, and Sue brought red roses in a hobnail vase. The mail brought me many letters and cards. So tonight, I'm weary but happy, and my tears are tears of joy.

4/13/61. The appraiser has been to Bill Graham's and Bob Kaldenberg's farms. Bill Kaldenberg and son Ronnie and Herman De Heer visited here Thursday morning. Excitement runs high about the return visit of Government men. We wait the answer as to the price of our land. John Vanden Berg and wife have purchased a house southeast of Pella.

4/25/61. Our white kitten got his head caught in a discarded pork and beans can. I found him in time.

5/4/61. Marie had branches of pussy willow from down on the river bottom.

5/25/61. There will be a picnic at Red Rock Church on Sunday, June 25, for any old timers or friends who wish to attend. It is a farewell before all the neighbors get scattered because of the dam and also before the schoolhouse and church are dismantled. So mark your calendars, write, call, and tell your friends.

5/25/61. Jess and Marie De Raad accepted the offer made for their farm by the negotiators for the Government for the dam. Dick and Nellie Brouwer have purchased lots in Pella.

5/25/61. Big tears roll down my face as I make my last garden on the farm at Bill's.

6/20/61. There were strawberries to the left of us, strawberries to the right of us, strawberries on the table and under the table! But we are happy for them all. I (or we) have frozen more than 11 gallons. There is no way to measure how much we have consumed on the table each day.

*An emotional bitter-sweet parting.* 7/6/61. More than 200 people attended the Red Rock picnic at the empty schoolhouse. It was difficult to get the names of everyone as they came and went throughout the day. Aunt Kate Karr got the gift for the oldest person. She will be 90 in November. In the afternoon, a great number went to the church and tolled the bell. Then there was a song fest singing the old, old songs we sang as young folks years ago. I heard one lady say that it had been 60 years ago that she was here. Arthur Nichols led the group in prayer. Some plans were discussed to again have the picnic next year and the next until all have moved away. It was with a sad heart that we walked around in the empty schoolhouse. Someone else remarked, "I went to school in the old schoolhouse." Another one said, "Never did I have such a happy reunion with old school mates and friends."

7/6/61. May Van Hemert visited me Tuesday afternoon. The Government negotiator has contacted her about her home here, and it just upsets you so it is about all you can discuss.

7/6/61. Two weeks ago we had trouble with our ducks. Two stray dogs (pups and starved) came here early one morning. Before noon, they killed 23 of our ducks. Roy had to send them to "dog heaven," I hope. This should never happen to innocent animals left to starve. There are places to put them as at a research station or at the dog pound.

7/13/61. May Van Hemert sold her home in Cordova to the Government on Wednesday. Bill Graham's let their farm and home go last Friday. More heartaches. Bill Graham's let their farm go but bought back their barn and two sheds. One shed has already been dismantled. They will use some of the lumber to build a three-car garage in Newton at the duplex apartment.

7/13/61. One evening Anna and Bill Waardhuizen were here with their son Art and family for coffee time. Anna remarked she thought she had her home full of keepsakes but that I've got her beat. It's the saddest job I ever had, trying to sort, destroy, and give away those things prior to moving. I never expected to move. Your flowers around the house stand for some friend who gave you the start, and even the trees. It's all made up of generations of people.

7/13/61. Merl and Cecil Price visited Tuesday evening with Margaret Ruckman. She will need to sell most of her farm to the Government for the dam project. We hear the Jack Jennings sold their big farm to the Government. Herb Vander Zyl said he let his go this week.

8/3/61. The Government negotiators have contacted Harold and Lloyd Karr, Sam and "Bean" Nichols, and the Dunreath Church.

8/3/61. There are two more young muskrats that swim in the creek near the bridge. Five new baby swallows have left their nest in our barn and sit in a row on the barn door track. The katydids sing in the evening now. A humming bird has been coming regularly to the tiger lilies at my north window. I'm very near her through the window, but she never scares if you don't move.

8/24/61. We saw the National Guard of Knoxville go by on Highway 14 for two weeks of camp. You are proud of your friends who protect you, but it always

recalls war time. Your heart beats faster and there are heartaches. We must pray for peace every day.

11/7/61. Numbers were posted on the four buildings on May Van Hemert's lot by the man from the Government dam office. He also made a check on moving her furniture and belongings to her new home in Knoxville within two weeks.

*The beginning of the end.* 11/14/61. Roy and I made our "fatal" decision today. We signed our contracts, too, for better or worse. It seems to be the most difficult problem we have ever had to face. It made me sick all over for 36 hours, the climax. Now the deal is closed, and it's somewhat a relief.

11/14/61. The mingling smells of apples and pears coming from the storeroom are signs of fall and winter. Good signs! There are some carrots to dig and some flower roots. We hardly have time for it all or the strength. One very warm day last week, I left both doors open to hear the songs of the "millions" of blackbirds that were here all day. There was almost a continuous stream all day.

11/22/61. Bill and family were here for dinner on Sunday two weeks ago. Darlene bounced indoors saying, "This may be your last family dinner here in Cordova." Tears rolled down my cheeks. She didn't mean to make me sorry, but to make me glad because we'll be in some kind of new house in Monroe. Last week's *Knoxville Journal* was full of a great list of farm land transfers to the U. S. Government—16 in all. It's fast going, and soon all will be gone—just like when an auctioneer cries a sale and says, "All gone!"

11/30/61. Thanksgiving Day, 1961! We pause to say grace and be thankful for all our blessings throughout the past year. Each day should be Thanksgiving Day, just like all days should be Mother's Day and Father's Day, and we could give Christmas gifts every day. What I am trying to say is you should be helpful and kind to all people about you, even your enemies. Each day gives us many things to be thankful for!

11/30/61. The Government tacked numbers on the buildings where Earl Martinache used to live.

11/30/61. Leland and Honor Balmer have sold their farm to the Government. They plan to move to their house in Monroe.

11/30/61. I'm packing a few things each day. Darlene has stored some pretty old dishes in her cupboard. The job looks like a big mountain now, but we'll get through. We have more than four months yet. We have not yet bought a new home.

11/30/61. *Slow death.* The Monroe telephone linemen were here in Cordova this week rolling up some extra wire. As each home is sold, out goes the telephone, and the electricity is cut off, and the neighborhood dies by degrees.

*It's bitter to leave one's lifetime home.* 11/30/61. May Van Hemert moved to her new home in Knoxville last Saturday and Sunday. She cried many tears that morning here at our house, but I kept smiling to help her smile. Her new little home at 513 East Marion street was all smilin' back at her, too, with new

floors, new paint, and wallpaper, and new blinds and curtains. So in time , you will just have to be happy, get adjusted and make new friends in a new neighborhood. *However; when May Van Hemert died in February, 1967, at age 87, Grace Karr said of her in the obituary,* She was one of the many displaced persons from the Red Rock dam area, and she was never happy after she had to leave her Cordova home near where she was born.

12/14/61. Pearl Harbor Day has gone by again. Wounds are supposed to grow better as time passes, but still you never forget. The word we had that day came over the radio at the Clarence Core home. Roy was there, and he came home to tell us. Immediately, all of the horrors of World War I came up.

12/14/61. Roy Karr has chosen Thursday afternoon, January 11, 1962, at 1 p.m. as the time for his sale. There will be free coffee and donuts for our friends who attend the sale.

12/14/61. Sam and Ethel Nichols have sold their home to the Red Rock dam project. They bought a house trailer and are furnishing it to live in, but they will leave it here in Iowa. They will have their other furniture transported to Phoenix, Arizona. They leave for Arizona, January 1.

12/14/61. Government engineers were drilling over west all day on the Mikesell, Templeton, and Harvey farms. All their equipment was in our field.

12/21/61. Remember our sale, Thursday, January 11, 1962, beginning at 12:30 p.m. This is our first and only sale and I suppose the last.

**1962.** 1/4/62. It's below zero here tonight, but the ice is off Highway 14, and snow plows have all the roads open. Ice on gravel roads yet. We have heaps and heaps of snow. Thawed a wee bit last Thursday. On Friday of the terrible snowstorm, three of the Otley teachers stayed in the school house all night. They had food in the school kitchen. I didn't hear how they slept.

1/18/62. Paul Cronkhite, my brother, and his wife Juanita of Glenview, Illinois, were here Sunday and Monday for dinner and supper and all the good long hours of visiting. It was our last New Year's holiday on the farm. It was Paul's home here for five years, too, so there was an undercurrent of sadness. Sunday before Christmas, Roy took a colored roll of film of beautiful snow pictures outside and our black cattle, etc.

1/18/62. A big moving van was at the Nichols house to load up the furniture to be moved to Arizona at the expense of the Red Rock dam project.

1/18/62. Cecil brought a sample of her new fruit cake. She baked some in gem pans. It's called Easy Fruit Cake. 1 cup mincemeat, 1 cup nuts, 1 cup candied fruits, a 15 oz. can sweetened condensed milk,  $\frac{3}{4}$  cup flour, and  $\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon soda. Bake for 1 hour in a greased pan lined with greased wax paper.

1/23/62. This is Friday, January 12, 1962. It's the day after for me. Our sale is over. We had a good buying crowd, the temperature was higher but still very cold. There was lots of good help. I never, never could have done it alone. As it is, I'm near complete exhaustion. Marie, Catherine, Lorena, and Darlene took over the free coffee and donuts. Between 250 and 300 folks were served all

through the day. Since last Saturday, our neighbors had been helping get ready for the sale. It seemed like an endless job, but everything had to be ready on time.

I feel sorry for anyone who has to live through the hard work and nervous strain of any type of sale. The "undercurrent" was great, you cry in the night, you look out the window and see your farm machinery going down the road, and your cattle and calves leaving for their new home, and it's all against your wishes and plans. We're still undecided where we will live in Monroe. We have six weeks left here.

2/22/62. Roy rented our farm back from the Government and will subrent it to Arthur and Jerry Waardhuizen.

*The neighborhood says goodbye to Grace and Roy Karr* 3/8/62. It's with combined emotions of sadness and happiness that I write of our farewell party at the Otley school house, Friday night, February 23. I never cried until I got home and in bed. It isn't that I can't be happy elsewhere and make new friends, but it's because I have to leave my old home, my mother's house, too, and my flower gardens, and trees, the big outdoors and the birds I've learned to love for 37 years and the neighbors and friends. There are memories you just can't pack and carry along.

We are not going far, and you are still my old neighbors, and you can come visit as Roy and I want to thank you for all the courtesy shown us. A good crowd attended—43 folks in all. Card games, colored slides, games for the children kept everyone busy. Our lunch was elaborate with fruit jello, assorted frosted cupcakes, open face cheese sandwiches, coffee, and cocoa. Snow began falling before we started home, but all arrived safely. We saw one car in the ditch at Vander Zyl's mine road.

*It won't be long now*. 4/6/62. They started to put a new roof on our house in Monroe. When we get moved, our address will be 111 W. Washington. Better write this in your address book, because I don't want to miss any of your letters. Have a feeling it will take two months for all the remodeling.

*Farewell to the timber*. 4/6/62. Wednesday I took a hike through the pasture for one hour to lose some pounds and just enjoy spring. Only heard one bluebird! Saw a hawk and crow. Many tunnels where mice had gone into the deep snow. I rested three times—once on an old dead tree in the old Cordova rock road where it went up the hill in 1886. A jet flying overhead keeping us safe, and it seemed out of order when all was so peaceful here. Probably my last trip to the old hickory tree.

7/9/62. Joe Clark's house is up on timbers and wheels, ready to be moved to their new home spot on Highway 14. Clarks are "batching" in a building on the farm for some time to care for the chickens and hogs.

**1963. Reporting from Monroe**: 7/9/63. One day last week, Nellie Ver Dught and I were on our front porch when we heard a terrible crash like an explosion. It was the front porch on our "old Cordova house" tumbling down. Now Hewitts, who purchased it and moved it to Monroe, have rebuilt it.

8/6/63. Saw that Buttrey's home from the farm had been moved to the high hill where Ted lived and out of the Teter Creek bottom where Red Rock Lake will flood. The house has a new picture window and sets at an angle. Jimmy and his new French bride will live there.



(Harriet Heusinkveld)

Historic Red Rock home, built of the native stone, had to be torn down.

8/6/63. Had my blood pressure checked Friday morning at Collins Hospital. It is still too high.

*A nostalgic visit to a farm.* 9/3/63. Most of the oats is baled and stored. Elmer Tukker had sprayed fence rows for grasshoppers around his yard and garden. I walked all through their garden Thursday evening. It was great. Cabbage and peppers are ready to harvest. We went through the barns and lots. No one will really ever know how glad I was to be on the farm again. There were the baby ducks, the half grown geese and chickens and calves, the pony colt that is one year old, and the mother. We saw the sun set in a mass of deep clouds. I have, of course the same beautiful sunsets in Monroe.

9/3/63. Word has come that some graves in some cemeteries are to be moved for the Red Rock dam project. There are one or two stones set up by the fence northwest of Cordova on the Joe Stevenson farm. East of Fifield on the farm once owned by Jess De Raad, there are graves and stones in the pasture west of where his house stood. A tiny baby was buried by the fence north of May Van Hemert's farm. It has no stone. Five or six graves are to be moved in the Red Rock cemetery.

**1965.** 10/27/65. Thursday we left for Red Rock, and Merl and Cecil took us to their new farm home south of Knoxville. It was good to roam over the place. They will live in the home already there, but they are planning a new house. We came back and had a big supper at their home in Red Rock (*The Prices were the very last family to move out of the area.*) It's always sad to know that it's our last trip there, but they will learn to be happy in their home. Neighbors are the De Joode's and the Don Vander Linden's, displaced from the area, too.



(Ruth Perkey)

Merl Price, last to leave the area, says farewell.

11/11/65. We stopped at Tukker's Friday evening. They had a new baby Holstein calf born that morning. The farm still holds our many interests. We watched them milk a part of their herd of 19 cows. It's Cornelia's job to wash the udders. Kickers are put on every cow. There were 9 big fat geese marching in line to the lot. Elmer has soybeans combined and was fall plowing. Several weeks ago, he injured his leg—blood clot was forming when he stepped in a hole. He has still kept at his farm work. We had newly home baked buns for coffee!

11/11/65. The reburial of three Karrs took place on Friday, October 15, 1965, at the Price cemetery. Those present were Ralph Wescott from the Rock Island Corps of Engineers; the man who had contracted to move the graves; three grave diggers from Knoxville; Jordan Evans, the undertaker; Knoxville's Presbyterian minister, Mildred Bowman; Joe and Myrtle Stevenson; Robert and Helen Finarty Stevenson; and Roy and I. It was a weird and eerie process. The rough boxes were new pine. They had small handles on each and a metal nameplate was attached to the lid of whose remains were "therein." The big stone markers will be moved by another crew. The Government will also put a new cement marker with a metal plate engraved with names and dates. The

three Karr remains were: Sylvia Karr, wife of John Karr, 1837-1874; John Karr, 1832-1897; and Jane Karr, wife of James Karr, 1806-1858.

*Coincidence.* 11/11/65. When Knoxville's Veterans gang had their "fire fighting" demonstration, an old building was hauled in from the dam area. When Bill saw it, he decided he knew what it was! So he walked all round and inside and behold it was the old coal house from Red Rock school! Many times they had played anti-over and hid there in hide-and-seek! I guess because he helped burn it, it jinxed him, and he slipped and injured his back. He was brought home on a stretcher and bedfasted for five days.

11/11/65. The Red Rock school was moved here to Monroe by Hewitt.



(Harriet Heusinkveld)

Red Rock school remodeled and made into a very attractive house.

*An historic occasion:* 11/18/65. "To go or not to go? With mixed emotions, I attended the dedication of the new mile-long bridge on Highway 14 over the Red Rock dam area. We watched it go up for two years. It gulped up a part of our farm. It's a massive thing. Chills and thrills run up and down your spine, as you looked over the side. It's all very strange, and our memories get mixed up with Merl's bluffs, and with the Templeton and Core farm, the rich fields laying waste in the weeds! There was a pheasant that flew up because the great amount of traffic disturbed his living.

The crowd was large. Our own Monroe band played, Pella's, Knoxville's, and Pleasantville's, too. Our Mayor, Guy Wilson, had the honor of helping cut the ribbon. We met many old friends. We have the engraved card from the Lt. Governor of Iowa, and a piece of the ribbon that some of our blood surely spilled over on. I walked to the south end of the bridge over the river. There was much picture taking. Just how would you feel if you were I?

11/18/65. After the dedication, Darlene and her parents invited me to accompany them as we drove to Pella down the river bottom road. Not much

corn picked yet. By the old Pete Vanden Berg farm, the big and roomy old country farm house was laid to waste in ashes one night this week. (*Mysteriously set afire presumably by a transient who slept there, before the Vanden Bergs had gotten all their belongings moved.*) The chimney stands alone to mark the spot. Telephone men were removing the poles from the lane to Aunt Kate's. What changes!



(Dorothy Templeton)

This beautiful farm operated by partners Hugh Templeton and Dwight Harvey (note the two houses), located about 1/2 mile west of Cordova, was one of many acquired by the Government to make way for Lake Red Rock. It was located directly under the present mile-long bridge on Highway 14.

**1966.** *Mrs. Karr didn't have nearly as many visitors dropping in for coffee as she had had in Cordova, but nothing pleased her more than to have former neighbors call on her.* 1/13/66. Old friends surprised us Tuesday in the early evening when Merl and Cecil stopped on their way home from a day shopping in Des Moines. Cecil always came to our house every week down at Cordova, and we would exchange news notes. Now we don't hear from each other for months at a time.

1/18/66. Estellene De Jong sends a Cordova fan story to me! The Bert Bandstra family of Washington, D.C., subscribe to the *Pella Chronicle*. They in turn pass it to a next door neighbor in Washington. And then you know what? This neighbor sends it to Pennsylvania to his aged father who is an avid reader of *Cordova News*. Say, Mr. Pennsylvania friend, I'd welcome a letter from you.

*Several graduates of the one-room Red Rock School made outstanding academic records. Among them:* 4/12/66. Jane Ann Templeton, daughter of Hugh and Dorothy, will enter Johns Hopkins University in June. She has a

scholarship and will do post graduate work in English. She graduates at Simpson College this June as a four-year English major. She will do some teaching. 10/13/66. Another note of great interest is Joe Templeton's placing in the top 15 among 11,378 other Iowa students who took the Merit Scholarship tests. Teenagers, we're proud of you.

4/12/66. Earl and Hilda Martinache visited us Saturday evening. They are very happy in their home in Knoxville. They now have two rooms carpeted and a new garbage disposal.

6/2/66. Otto Wynsteker had coffee with us, and the same morning Jerry Martinache dropped in.

*Grace received a series of riotous letters from two college girls from Pella (M.W. and P.H) who were traveling in Europe in 1966 and 1967. They called themselves the Mazorp Group. Grace soon sensed that they were "spoofing," her, but she played along and quoted them. How she enjoyed receiving their letters, but she never knew their identity. They wrote: "Innsbruck is quite a lovely town although we do have a warm spot for our favorite Cordova. We are all corn people at heart. The scenery is omnipresent... 'In Spain the oranges are fantastic. The word of the week is naranja, which means 'orange' in Spanish. Why don't you tell Roy you'll fix him some naranja juice for breakfast. He'll probably go to Duncan's instead...' . . . 'We threw some coins in the fountain in Rome and made a wish for you. Don't know exactly if all the wishes will come true because some of the coins missed the fountain and hit some pigeons on the other side. Now we're trying to see the Pope. If anyone could get a message through, he could...' . . . 'Today we had lunch with the Netherlands' most famous movie star, Klein Beetje. She has relatives in southeast Iowa, and would appreciate it if you would pass the word. Looking forward to having coffee with you.' —The Mazorp Group. Grace adds. "They write as if I should know them. I'm very puzzled over it. I'll find a very important place for their cards among mine because I have very few foreign cards."*

*This item does not sound like Mrs. Karr's style of writing. She used the wording of the birth announcement.* 10/6/66. Bill and Darlene Karr proudly present their new model 1966 Karr Super De Luxe Custom built model, Jennie Rae Karr. Curb weight—8 lbs., 3½ oz. Wheelbase—21 inches. Showroom premier—9-21-66, 1:53 a.m. Jennie Rae is our third grandchild! Her sisters are Sharon Hjortshoj and Sue Karr. We are all so very proud of her. We'll try not to spoil her, but it will be difficult when we've not had a baby for so long.

*Good to meet folks from the old neighborhood.* 12/8/66. When we were in Pella Thursday, we met Effie De Jong Vermeer. Darlene recognized her but I didn't! Her son Stevie was with her, a "live wire" and he goes to Christian School. Mr. Wassing also visited with Roy. Uptown Bill Davis and Henry Gosselink met us and saw Jennie Rae.

2/8/67. Roy and I spent Thursday with Darlene and Jennie Rae. She is so much joy. Now she can roll over, laughs out loud and "talks" to us.

Five years after leaving Cordova, Grace can view the move with comparative serenity. 6/2/66. To the country we went for almost all day. Took seed corn to Tony. It was a nice afternoon after the rains. Flowers and birds were everywhere. I never got to hike in the woods to look for mushrooms or prowl in Cordova at our old home but enjoyed seeing it as we drove by. The crab-apples are in full bloom, a ball of pink. The hawthorns are all white with their stinky, smelly blooms. Lilacs are coming out but are not at their peak. There were flocks of bluebirds and goldfinches at Tony's. New signs through Red Rock say, "Painted Rocks Area." That's the new division that is being laid out west of the Red Rock Cemetery on the hill. Lots are for sale.

**1967.** Through the years, Cordovans maintained their ties with each other in periodic get-togethers. 3/16/67. A community picnic is being planned for the second Sunday in June, 1967. The place is the Marion County Fair Grounds in the 4-H building near the entrance gate. The folks who are welcome to attend are the old residents of Red Rock, Dunreath, Fifield, Percy, and Cordova (the towns vacated and soon to be drowned by the waters of Lake Red Rock). So go right this minute and make long range plans. Let's make it as big as the Iowa picnic in L. A.

After living in Monroe for 5 years, Grace decided it was too difficult to keep in touch and to learn the news concerning former Cordova folk now scattered in all directions. Nor did she have her beloved timber with its wealth of wild life to write about—birds, animals, flowers, trees, mushrooms, hickory nuts, and wild fruits. It was time to quit and to devote herself to family and other interests.

The *Pella Chronicle*, June 17, 1967, paid tribute to Grace Karr in a several-column front page feature article entitled *GRACE KARR RETIRES: Cordova News Ends*.

"In May, Grace Karr retired from duty as a country correspondent and put *Cordova News* to bed. Her retirement came after 40 years of association with the *Pella Chronicle* and a total of 51 years in journalism. She ended her career still holding the record for the most years of service of the Chronicle correspondents (and likely in Iowa) . . . .

The Chronicle continued,

"Grace never missed sending in her columns whether busy at home, with her son, on vacation, or on her back in the hospital, she continued to write. Everything found its way into Grace's column. Births, deaths, weddings, editorializing, nature stories, and funny incidents filled out its normal length of 10 longhand pages. Her colloquialisms and distinctive style endeared her to many readers and set her apart from other country correspondents."

Two years later, October 9, 1969, Grace Karr died at the age of 70 years following a massive stroke. Her death coincidentally occurred the same year that Cordova was drowned under the waters of Lake Red Rock.



(Bill Karr)

Elm tree, oldest and largest in Iowa, was on the Karr farm, now near the entrance to Cordova Trail in Elk Rock State Park. Bill Karr to the right.

*In her columns, Grace Karr had ennobled the lives of her fellow Cordovans by finding much to admire in each of them. She had shared the joy and camaraderie of working together in making a living on the farm, as well as depicting its hard work, heartaches, and hazards. An ardent advocate of world peace, she began by living at peace within her own community. She was a true conservationist and ahead of her time in decrying large dams—they are no longer being constructed. Her beloved timber can be rediscovered by nature lovers who walk the Cordova Trail marked out in North Elk Rock State Park by the Iowa Department of Natural Resources.*

*She had served her community well by providing the news, sometimes with commentary, about its citizens, in itself a method of forging community. For later generations, her column serves as a sociological, historical record of a small Iowa river-railroad town and its surrounding agricultural area during the middle decades of the 1900s.*

*She had that magic touch in writing—humorous, poignant, exuberant, quaint, fresh, unconventional—which made her column a reader's delight.*



Dr. Harriet Heusinkveld, Professor of Geography at Central College, now retired, is the author of: *Saga of the Des Moines River Greenbelt*; *Legends of the Mayas of Yucatan, Mexico*; and "Ghost Towns in the Central Des Moines River Valley" in *Take This Exit*, by R. Sayre.